University of Alberta

A Case Study of Exceptional Physical Education Teachers

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to inquire into the professional and personal lives of four physical education specialist teachers and to uncover the reasons why they engage in their practice as they do. The study documents the experiences of each teacher and provides insights from both these participants and the researcher. Questions inquiring about the reasons why current physical education teachers engage in their practice(s) as they do, and how factors, during their careers as physical educators, influence their teaching were asked and investigated.

The research used case study as its method of data collection and analysis. To be precise, the current research employed a multi-case design. A combination of the descriptive and heuristic case study was used to share the findings. Semi-structured, individual interviews were completed with the four physical education teachers.

The interview data were organized into four categories and further subdivided into specific themes within each category. The categories were designated as (a) Relating to/with students, (b) Experiences gained through teaching, (c) Self-awareness, and (d) Passion about the field of physical education.

The major findings were divided into two distinct areas. Those that were grounded in previous research literature and those findings that were new and not grounded in previous research literature. The major findings that were grounded in previous research literature were: (1) Evolution and maturity, (2) Caring for students, (3) Options and variety for students, (4) Professional development and self-improvement, (5) Varied teaching styles, and (6) Reflection. The major findings that were not grounded in previous research literature were: (1) Meaning of physical education, (2) Confidence, (3)

Belief and joy in teaching physical education, and (4) Personal fulfillment and commitment to the job.

The study has made six recommendations for action including various aspects that can be addressed in a pre-service teachers undergraduate program. Four suggestions for further research are also proposed including additional studies to assess the degree of influence that experience has on the teaching practice of physical educators.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

> Physical education has a unique role to fulfill in the education of children and youth. It empowers individuals to learn about their world and to be active within it. In so doing, it nurtures human and social values and encourages the preservation of human rights and freedoms wherein our humanity can be most profoundly expressed. (Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance [CAHPERD], 1998, p. 1)

The symbols in Figure 1 represent the four general outcomes of the provincial K-12 physical education curriculum in Alberta: (a) activity, (b) benefits health, (c) cooperation, and (d) do it daily for life.

Figure 1. General outcomes of the provincial K-12 curriculum (Alberta Learning, 2000).

Physical education has long been considered an important part of a student's overall education (CAHPERD, 1998) and, as a subject area, it holds a unique position among school curricula (Fishburne & Hickson, 2001). However, it has never realized its rightful place among the core subjects and perceived "more important" courses (Hardman & Marshall, 2000). Negative stereotyping and public perception have also influenced how society views physical education (Harris, 2003). As a former teacher of physical education for Grades 7-12, I have heard firsthand opinions on the subject area and

people's general attitude towards teachers of physical education. All subjects possess their own personal appeal, but it can be argued that children enjoy no other subject as much as physical education during their developmental years in elementary education. However, a great deal of evidence has suggested that as children mature both mentally and physically, physical education is no longer an enjoyable class, and their opinion of physical education and its teachers is often negative and uncomplimentary (Deacon, 2000).

Teachers of physical education should accept part of the responsibility for the high numbers of students unwilling to enroll in elective physical education courses and for the high numbers dissatisfied with their physical education experiences. O'Sullivan and Dyson (1994) found that many teachers failed to explain to students the purpose of their physical education programs and, as well, that many teachers over their careers had decreased their expectations of students because they appeared to become more challenging of authority and less willing to engage intensively with the subject matter.

These findings are similar to those of Hastie and Siedentop (1999), who indicated that teachers who hold students accountable for managerial tasks, such as dressing for class and simply being present, tend to suspend the instructional task system, which contains those details that encompass the content of the lesson and include the knowledge and skills to be learned. Suspending this system results in students performing only as much of the instructional task as they wish. An example is a student who performs the activities in a weight-training circuit according to the outlined requirements of the teacher, but who does not challenge himself or herself to make these activities more difficult or challenging.

In one study, Parker (1995) found that the majority of teachers of physical education had indicated that their primary goals were organization, management, discipline, and control, with their ultimate goal being student success in learning skills and acquiring knowledge. If this finding is, in fact, the focus of today's physical educators, then we are performing our roles inadequately, with short-term student benefits as the outcome, but with minimal regard for the complexity of long-term student benefits. Hardman and Marshall (2000) probed our roles and responsibilities as physical education teachers and surmised that most physical education teachers are only managers, organizers, and supervisors of physical activities who are hoping for success to 'emerge' within their students. If the priorities and expectations of physical education teachers do not receive the highest possible regard, physical education will never achieve the same status and perceived importance as the core subjects of mathematics, science, and literature (Siedentop, 2002b).

Despite the general lack of expertise among elementary teachers in the area of physical education (Berg, 2002) and the frequent lack of high expectations of high school physical educators (O'Sullivan & Dyson, 1994), many teachers do a phenomenal job teaching and educating students about the values and importance of physical education, along with instructing students very proficiently in skill acquisition. Why do some teachers of physical education perpetually have success teaching in this often misunderstood subject area? This question merits serious attention.

As a former public school teacher, I have learned that experience can change one's thinking and approach towards teaching children, preparing lessons, and evaluating students. I have worked with and observed teachers who have been both younger and

older than I am, whose experiences have ranged from those of a novice to those of a superannuated teacher. I was intrigued to observe that some teachers of physical education have a special ability to connect with students in a physical education environment and, consequently, to have children participate fully. As a result of the specific skills and expertise that they have acquired through experience, these teachers have the ability to increase students' enthusiasm for physical activity and to heighten students' intrinsic motivation.

However, the body of current literature related specifically to the relationships among the characteristics and practice of exceptional teachers of physical education is limited, and thus this research adds to that body. Furthermore, Harrison (1987) stated, "Perhaps researchers need to spend more effort determining *why* teachers believe and do what they do!" (p. 50). As well, Fishburne and Hickson's (2001) concern also indirectly supports my research: "The notion of what is effective teaching behavior and how it supports student-learning is a relatively thin area" (p. 10).

With the recent global attention that has been assigned to particular health issues, teachers who are teaching physical education have an opportunity to heighten the awareness and importance of the role that physical education can play in addressing these issues. For instance, the World Health Organization (2002) reported that in 2001, 1.9 million global deaths were attributed directly to physical inactivity. Research has shown that appropriate physical activity instruction plays an important role in reducing anxiety, depression, and tension and has positive effects on the emotional state of both young and old people. In children, physical activity results in increased self-esteem and

perceived physical competence, elements that enable children to cope with mental stress (DeMarco & Sidney, 1989).

From a local perspective, the provincial government of Alberta, Canada, has mandated an initiative for a minimum of 30 minutes of daily physical activity, which is linked to the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the current physical education program in Alberta schools in September 2005 for Grades 1-9 and in September 2006 for Grades 10-12. The expected outcomes of the daily physical activity initiative are that through a supportive environment and well-planned programs by qualified teachers, schools will optimize physical activity levels of students during the school year and increase or maintain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students necessary to lead active, healthy lifestyles.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to inquire into the professional and personal lives of physical education specialist teachers and to uncover the reasons that they engage in their practice as they do. The study documents the experiences of physical education teachers from the perspective of each teacher and provides insights from these participants and myself as the researcher.

This study inquires into the professional and personal lives of physical education specialists to uncover their reasons for engaging in their practice as they do. I am interested in how the experiences of the participants have affected their teaching careers as these experiences specifically relate to the teaching of physical education. In this research I have focused on the current practices of four physical education teachers whom I have selected, in consultation with regional representatives and physical

education consultants, as exceptional and respected professionals committed both to the education profession and, specifically, to the field of physical education. The study of their experiences and current practices has led to important findings that may benefit all physical educators currently teaching in all school systems as well as those instructors of physical education teacher education (PETE) programs in postsecondary institutions.

Coming to the Question

I was raised in a rural Saskatchewan farming community where activity, healthy living and education were considered vital in the development of young people and were strongly valued by my family as well. I enjoyed school and was dedicated to my studies, which I complemented by active involvement in organized sports in both the school and community leagues. I respected my teachers, coaches, and parents for the guidance they provided during my developmental years and rarely, if ever, thought of questioning authority. My school years passed by, and soon, attending university was my reality. I continued my involvement in physical activity and managed to balance the stresses of postsecondary education with the enjoyment of physical pursuits.

Having entered a faculty of education, I believed that I was well aware of what I needed to learn and accomplish to be a successful teacher. I had, after all, just completed 12 years of formal education and was quite familiar with the career that I had chosen to pursue. Although admittedly naïve about what I really needed to learn as a future teacher of physical education, I had surmised that because I was athletic and had played a variety of sports throughout my life, I was well equipped to offer my knowledge and expertise to the students who would be under my tutelage in the very near future.

Nearing the completion of my education degree, and realizing that I was about to embark upon a teaching career for the next 30 years, I began to listen seriously to the comments of people regarding the teaching profession and was very interested in the public's perception of physical educators. I was generally impressed with the admiration that people had for teachers in general, but sensed that "respect" was lacking in perceptions of physical education teachers in particular. This perceived lack of respect for a subject area and therefore, by association, for the people responsible for teaching it, troubled me. I was about to become a teacher specializing in physical education, but I realized quickly that the subject of physical education had an image problem that needed to be addressed. I was young and inexperienced and felt that I now had the extra burden of trying to justify a subject area to students, parents, and fellow educators.

At the age of 21, I became employed in a high school in a large school division in northern Saskatchewan. During my seven years as the high school athletic director and principal physical education teacher, I was afforded many opportunities to become involved in curriculum design and implementation. As an advisor for three separate physical education curricula and also as pilot teacher, inservice leader, and reviewer of resources, I was able to learn much more about the subject of physical education and the teachers who had been hired to carry out the task of teaching physical education to Saskatchewan students.

As the years passed and my experiences broadened, I learned valuable lessons from my students and fellow colleagues. As a young professional and a minority in the community where I was employed, I was cognizant of my status and the respect granted to me simply for being a teacher. I never once took this responsibility lightly and felt I

needed to always conduct myself professionally with my students and within the community.

As I gained more experience and continued to be involved with provincial health and physical education organizations, I began thinking about the professionals who surrounded me and wondered what *they* valued most as teachers. In what did they take pride within their schools? Over the years, how had they changed in their careers as teachers and, specifically, as teachers of physical education? How had their identities been formed through their experiences? Through my personal experiences of traveling and talking with teachers from all parts of the province, I became aware of the subtle differences among these physical educators and that physical education programs in various schools could flourish or, in many instances, struggle.

My opinion was that, in many schools with a female physical education teacher, the physical education program seemed to be more vibrant and to have more enthusiasm and energy than were present in those schools where mainly males taught physical education. As a practicing teacher, I had noticed a more willing attitude among female physical education teachers than among male teachers to plan and teach activities such as educational gymnastics, educational dance, aerobics, circuit training, and aquatic activities and to use the outdoors for educational purposes. I hypothesized that female teachers made a difference, so I began a research study to determine whether gender—that is, being female—had any influence on the instruction of physical education and whether female physical education teachers perceived teaching physical education any differently than their male counterparts did.

From my findings (Chorney, 2000), I concluded that gender did not make any "significant" difference overall in the planning or teaching of physical education. However, the question of how gender relates to the instruction of physical education remains with me today and is a topic that I hope to continue researching.

Upon the completion of my master's degree, the Faculty of Education at a respected university in Western Canada hired me. My responsibilities included teaching courses in physical education curriculum and instruction for preservice elementary, middle school, and high school teachers, along with supervising preservice physical education teachers during their practica experiences in the field.

In addition to having a formal role as a university facilitator for student teachers, I was afforded many opportunities to observe numerous physical education programs being implemented and, subsequently, many different physical education teachers. Over a two-year time frame, I observed male and female professionals who ranged in experience from 2 to 33 years. I was privileged to witness meaningful teaching and learning in several classrooms. However, I also observed classrooms where teaching was ineffective, and meaningful learning was not happening. This problem was obvious to me because classes were often left unsupervised and inappropriate "game play," as opposed to a "teaching games for understanding" approach, was the primary teaching method employed. Some of the questions that I asked myself and, in some cases, teachers were, Why do students still have to wait in lines during their learning time? Why are students allowed to pick their own teams? Why are outdated student learning resources still being used? Where is the student involvement in the educational process? The answers to these

questions eluded me, but the motivation of the teachers to instruct in these particular ways intrigued me even more.

Many more questions and not enough answers were the result of my time working with preservice and inservice teachers. These nagging questions encouraged me to embark upon a study designed to clarify some of the characteristics that distinguish the "exceptional" physical education teacher and to probe into the personal and professional lives of four practicing physical education teachers.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

Grasp the Subject, And the Words Will Follow. (Cato the Elder)

Introducing the Literature

This research study is a qualitative inquiry into the professional practices of four physical educators. Specifically, I asked and investigated questions that inquired about the reasons that current physical education teachers engage in their practice(s) as they do. A review of the relevant literature revealed that both quantitative (positivistic) and qualitative (naturalistic) research methods have been used to investigate the many facets of physical education instruction, including effectiveness, successes, curriculum, and future concerns for the field.

In a preliminary literature search, I used key words such as *physical education*, *pedagogy*, *curriculum*, *teacher effectiveness*, *teacher education*, and *expertise in teaching*. In the final review of the literature, I utilized databases such as *ERIC*, *Sport Discus*, *Canadian Education Index*, and *Dissertation Abstracts* to search for the most current and relevant literature related to the proposed study.

The following sections help increase the reader's understanding of the research on the field of physical education, teacher development and reflection, and the characteristics of effective teaching and exceptional teaching in physical education. Specific themes within each of these categories will be discussed, along with the subtle differences between an "effective" teacher and an "exceptional" teacher of physical

education. The literature will help to ground the findings of each research participant in his or her respective environment.

Physical Education and Philosophical Discourse

When discussing the profession of teaching and, specifically, the instruction of physical education, one must consider history and its relation to the present. The debate about why physical education teachers do what they do has probably resulted from what has happened in the past and how the origins of sport and physical activity evolved in Canada. It is reasonable to assume that past practices and the reasons for implementing physical education in schools in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have had a profound and long-lasting effect on school programs and become well engrained in the value system of today's society.

From a philosophical perspective, one could argue that minimal research has been conducted on the fundamental nature of knowledge and reality as they explicitly relate to physical education instruction. The current beliefs that are valued and subsequently put into daily practice in gymnasia and fields across Canada are, arguably, based on history and teachers' personal values and beliefs.

History

Although Canada became a semi-independent political entity in 1867, it is doubtful whether a particularly "Canadian" way of life or culture existed during the 19th century, for Canadians heavily depended upon continental Europe, Britain, and the United States for immigrants, financial resources, attitudes, and values (Widmeyer, 1983). Therefore, any analysis of 19th and 20th century Canadian sport and the development of formalized physical education instruction in schools should include a

consideration of the sources lying outside Canada itself. Because of the predominance of the British influence during the establishment of early Canada, English-speaking Canada assimilated many of the contemporary British viewpoints.

Organized sport and regular physical education classes in the schools originated, for the most part, in the burgeoning urban areas of Ontario and Quebec (Cosentino & Howell, 1971). This origin reflected Canadian society, which was changing from a frontier and rural environment into an increasingly urban and industrial society. The actual development of a curriculum and the implementation of physical education in Canadian schools can be thought of as happening over three distinct time periods that mirror the three predominant modes of curriculum theorizing in education today: traditionalist theorizing, conceptual-empiricist theory, and the reconceptualist view (Haslam, 1988).

The time frame for the first wave of physical education curriculum development was approximately 1933-1957. This curriculum is widely believed to have emerged from the British syllabus of physical training (Haslam, 1988). The British model recognized the need for an integrated mental, physical, and spiritual education and used the writings of Plato and others as references. The curriculum emphasized fitness and health primarily for military purposes.

The years 1957 to 1972 are generally considered the period of the next developmental processes in physical education curriculum thought and development. This era was directly created with the launching of Russia's Sputnik and the beginning of the "space race" and "cold war." Team sports and games became a curricular emphasis, along with the addition of lifetime sports. These emphases resulted from societal changes

that had established a shorter work-week and a subsequent increase in the amount of leisure time (Haslam, 1988). The content of the second wave was based heavily upon competitive sport and expressive play activities.

The teaching personal and social responsibility model developed by Hellison (1995) provides a progression of goals through which students move to become fully responsible citizens of the physical education class with the intent that those behaviors and values extend beyond the classroom. Many teachers who employ the Hellison model have turned these goals into a set of levels that provide a simple vocabulary and a set of concepts that allow teachers and their students to understand, think about, prompt, and evaluate the level of their personal and social responsibility (Hellison, 1985, 1995).

Today, a strong focus on competitive sport still exists in many high schools, with much less focus on expressive play in all grade levels. This recent era has also seen the beginning of a large increase in the diversity of teaching strategies. Unfortunately, in many schools the spectrum from open-ended discovery learning to task mastery and direct teaching made physical education seem like an extension of recess.

Generally speaking, the past 20 years have seen physical education curricula in Canada become more marginalized, confused, and disarrayed than ever before, according to Haslam (1988). Pockets of responsive initiatives along with gimmicky projects have led to some limited success. The verdict is still out on long-lasting attitudinal changes in students to a focus on a more meaningful and relevant experience in physical education in combination with increased significance attached to learning within the physical education context. These desired attitudinal changes are anticipated by all professionals who are teaching and researching in the field of physical education. The pace of change

within society has continued to accelerate and will require a populace that can live with uncertainty and change. The ability to relate to people, to communicate with others, and to understand them will be the required skills of children in the future (Pinar, 2000).

The challenges facing today's physical educators are countless. In recent research the World Health Organization (2002) and the Canadian Institute for Health Information (2004) outlined the current health problems of children and youth, changes that need to be addressed immediately both within schools and beyond the walls of today's classrooms. These changes will have to include a tighter relationship between health and physical education, and educators in these fields will want to focus their planning and instruction more intently on their intended audience, their students. The general confusion for learners within a physical education learning environment must be clarified, with genuine concern for students' health and well-being placed at the forefront of all pedagogical and subject area pedagogical discourse.

It is imperative that physical education specialists respond to the current challenges and begin employing a more holistic approach to their planning and instruction of physical education. Many "effective" teachers of physical education are already aware of the need to extend the boundaries of the subject area of physical education. As well, continuously requesting the opinions of students to ensure that their voice is being heard is a valuable way for teachers to include students in the teaching-learning process. The need to respond to some of the challenges facing today's physical education teachers is imminent, but the task is not impossible. By identifying specific shortcomings in their practice or program, all teachers of physical education have the capacity to effect positive changes and ultimately to affect their students positively.

Developing a Personal Philosophy

One's personal philosophy about the subject of physical education reflects one's value orientation and, in turn, guides the choices made in interpreting and implementing a particular curriculum. A teacher's value orientation determines what he or she considers to be the "most important outcomes" in physical education. *Value orientation* is a set of personal and professional beliefs that provides a basis for determining curricular decisions. Often, physical education teachers have several value orientations, so that physical education programs reflect a blend of different values (Pangrazi & Gibbons, 2003).

Determining the value orientation of a curriculum involves the consideration of three major components: the subject matter to be learned, the students, and the society that has established the schools. Priorities within a particular curriculum and, subsequently, one's personal philosophy may vary considerably and result in quite diverse programs from one school to another. For example, physical educators who place a high priority on subject mastery include an emphasis on sport, dance, outdoor pursuits, and other physical fitness activities. Doing so, in turn, places strong emphasis on learning skills and gaining knowledge, and students have the opportunity to learn the subject matter and to continue active participation for a lifetime (Pangrazi & Gibbons, 2003). In contrast, teachers who favor a student-centered approach prioritize activities and learning opportunities that develop the individual student. These teachers help students to find personally meaningful activities by focusing instruction on life-long sport skills and nontraditional activities such as cooperative games and group activities in an attempt to foster problem solving and interpersonal skills (Pangrazi & Gibbons, 2003).

A personal philosophy about physical education needs to address the portion of a child's overall education that is accomplished through participation in physical movement (Rink, 1985). It is an education about, and involving, movement and learning through all three domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. High-quality programs that are based on developmental goals with demonstrable outcomes in all three domains will generally be most effective.

Teacher Development and the Role of Reflection

Introduction

"Anyone can teach" is a phrase that has been used frequently by people in all walks of life. For decades, the intricacies and specific nuances of teaching have been largely unknown and misunderstood by those outside the teaching profession. Students contemplating the teaching profession have long thought that the skills required to be a successful teacher could easily be acquired and replicated if they simply copied the behaviors of their favorite teachers.

Perspectives Related to Teacher Development

Teacher development has emerged over the last decade as an identifiable area of study and much has been written on the subject. The teacher development literature has served to disseminate information on enhancing teachers' practice and, by extension, schools' performance. It has provided the forum for discussion about the nature of teaching and the future of the teaching profession. Yet, as an area of study, teacher development tends for the most part to be dominated by specific issues, while the concept itself and the methods that may effect teacher development remain comparatively

neglected. In the teacher development literature, for example, very few definitions of teacher development may be found.

Fuller's model of teacher development, based on an analysis of teachers' concerns, posits a three-stage model of teacher development moving from (1) concerns about self, to (2) concerns about tasks, to (3) concerns about students and the impact of teaching (Fuller, 1969).

In the mid-1970's a revised three-stage model was proposed and, has persisted unchanged to the present time. Fuller and Bown's widely cited study on the developmental pattern of concerns that prospective and young teachers move through can be summarized as a general movement *outward* from concerns about self, changing to concerns about situation and task then culminating in concerns about students (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975).

Fuller's work is perhaps the most classic of stage theories in that it was meant to be relatively invariant, sequential and hierarchical (Richardson & Placier, 2001). Overall, two strands of research have grown out of Fuller's concerns-based approach to teacher development. The first strand is dedicated to understanding the developmental dynamics of pre-service and early in-service teachers (Pigge & Marso, 1997), and the second assesses teacher concerns in the context of innovation adoption (Anderson, 1997; Hord & Hall, 2000). This latter strand has become known as the concerns-based adoption model (CBAM).

Kagan's (1992) review of research on professional growth among pre-service and beginning teachers makes a number of broad claims about early teacher development. First, according to Kagan, there appears to be an increase in meta-cognition as

prospective and novice teachers become more aware of what they know and do not know, and how these aspects of knowledge and beliefs limit or enable their success as teachers. Second, there tends to be a shift in attention away from self towards task and impact on students, as the most urgent self-related concerns are resolved. Third, beginning teachers appear to be intensely concerned with image of self-as-teacher.

Kagan's three claims are consistent with an extensive range of literature on learning to teach that draws attention to novice teachers' understanding themselves "as a precondition and concomitant condition to understanding others" (Pinar, 1981, p. 186).

An exclusive press towards an outward-focus teacher development model seems at odds with the contemporary appeal of reflective practitioners models of teacher development. A reflective practitioner model requires that teachers remain aware of and attentive to their own development more so than being concerned about anyone or anything else. As Harter (1997) has observed, research in human development suggests that a balance between *self* and *other* is both a well-supported model of development and one that is more desirable. There should not be a feeling that one model of teacher development is superior to the other, but that both models are equally important for teacher development and subsequently teacher improvement. In addition, an outward only focus and direction is problematic in teacher education as it excludes opportunities to foster self-regulated learning (SRL) among prospective teachers, who in turn may be in a better position to foster (SRL) among their own students (Tillema, 2000).

A neglect of self-as-teacher, as a result of an outward only focus in teacher education, is at odds with contemporary reflective practitioner models of teacher education, and hinders prospective teachers' development in two areas in particular, that

is, their understanding of themselves as cultural beings, as well as their development as self-regulated learners (Tillema, 2000).

There has been an ongoing debate in research on learning to teach and teacher education about whether beginning and novice teachers go through stages or not (Bunn, Hagger, Everton, & Mutton, 2000a; Kagan, 1992). A related argument occurs around the extent to which they can or cannot reflect on tasks and concerns that are complex and sophisticated – more typical of a later stage in career development. Those who make a case for beginning teachers' capacity to engage in sophisticated moral, ethical, and pedagogical reflection often attend to the variety (as opposed to most salient) of expressed concerns at any given point in time, while learning to teach.

Lynn (2002) has proposed a model outlining eight phases of a teacher's career cycle. As one of her earlier stages in this model Lynn (2002) discusses the stage of competency building where a teacher strives to improve teaching skills and abilities by seeking out new materials, methods, and strategies. Teachers at this stage are receptive to new ideas, attend conferences willingly and enroll in graduate programs through their own initiative. Fessler (1992) considers this a critical period in the career cycle. He suggests that those teachers who are highly successful in building confidence in and skill with their teaching competencies will likely move forward into an enthusiastic and growing stage of their career development.

Conway & Clark (2003) found that intern teachers (students involved in a teaching practicum experience) had a shift in their concerns and aspirations from those about personal capacity to manage their classrooms to concerns about their personal capacity to grow as a teacher and person. The intern teachers engaged in a progression

toward greater self-awareness/self-knowledge and subsequently made efforts at greater self-organization and self-development.

Additionally, according to Conway & Clark (2003), much research on prospective and novice teachers has concentrated on teacher anxieties and concerns rather than on their aspirations, which both researchers find puzzling. As well, they point out that a concerns-only approach to understanding teacher development negatively biases and constrains our view of teacher development.

While models of teacher development do not provide direct prescriptions for teacher education programs they nevertheless enrich and complicate our understanding of how student teachers can think and change in response to efforts to promote thoughtful ideals on learning to teach. Building on student teachers' hopes and aspirations with the same energy that is devoted to challenging their fears and concerns may accelerate and deepen their developmental journey toward expertise in teaching.

In a consideration of the literature as it pertains to teacher development specifically related to physical education, some interesting perspectives emerge. As Lortie (1975) explained, "What students learn about teaching from their teachers is generally intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles" (p. 62).

Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship-of-observation model discusses how students in a physical education context often "see" and "experience" their teachers from a front-and-center perspective. Rarely, if ever, are they aware of a teacher's private intentions and personal reflections on classroom events. Students' knowledge of teaching, gained from a limited vantage point and relying heavily on imagination, is not like that of an apprentice

and does not represent acquisition of the occupation's technical knowledge. It is more a matter of imitation, which, generalized across individuals, becomes tradition. Furthermore, Lortie (1975) stated "teaching does not require as much preparation as some professions and that it [teaching] is relatively high on general schooling and somewhat low on specialized schooling" (p. 60).

In addition, Lortie (1975) believed that students with aspirations of attending university and desiring to be physical education teachers learn the significance of good grades and the value of teacher favor and that students learn to "take the role" of the classroom teacher and to engage in at least enough empathy to anticipate the teacher's probable reaction to their behavior. Unfortunately, the depth in which preservice education students actually internalize the profession and put into practice the value and necessity of critically reflecting upon it is minimal. They are rarely asked to participate in making decisions related to selecting goals, making preparations, or assessing achievement. Thus, they are not required to place the teachers' actions in a pedagogically oriented framework; they are simply witnesses from their own student-oriented perspective (Lortie, 1975).

However, in defense of his apprenticeship-of-observation model, Lortie (1975) commented that some students who had recently taken up the profession of teaching reported a stark contrast in their original perception of what teaching entailed. Some felt that, for example, teaching made more demands on their time and energies than they expected, whereas other students felt that their undergraduate training was unrealistic. Lortie concluded that neither the apprenticeship-of-observation model nor a students' formal training prepared them adequately for the real world of teaching.

Later, in 1979, Zeichner noted that during the apprenticeship period the experiences and beliefs that were acquired act as a screen or filter for new information. Thus, student teachers' beliefs may be modified, but student teachers are not blank slates waiting for new information to be written upon them.

Lawson (1983) introduced the concept of the subjective warrant within the sphere of physical education. The subjective warrant, developed through years of socialization, represents student teachers' perceptions of the requirements and belief systems that characterize a given profession. Student teachers match their personal characteristics, abilities, and aspirations by comparing them with the subjective warrant.

One aspect of the subjective warrant that has received some attention is the affinity for coaching that characterizes many student teachers in physical education (Bain & Wendt, 1983). Chu (1984) and Hutchinson (1993) reported that their research results overwhelmingly indicate that future teachers perceive teaching as a bridge to further their coaching ambitions.

According to Burke (1987), procedural skills must be mastered to enter the teaching profession and to stay in it with any degree of success. It is important to recognize that subject matter expertise is not the sole determinant of success in teaching and that procedural skills also require appropriate application, without which procedural skills alone will not assure success any more than will amounts of learning when they are divorced from individual personal development.

Expressing another view, Schon (1987) proposed that, as a profession, teaching could be considered a practice composed of a community of practitioners who share the traditions of a calling. As well, practitioners of a particular profession differ from one

another in their subspecialties and the particular experiences and perspectives that they bring to their work (Schon, 1987).

More recently, Graber (2001), in her review *Research on Teaching in Physical Education,* outlined a framework for organizing the literature. Her model consists of nine separate categories organized around the logical operations of teaching. These categories include teacher characteristics, teacher competencies, pre-impact behaviors, instructional content, mediating constructs, impact behaviors, student characteristics, outcomes, and post-impact behaviors.

Graber (2001) extended the understanding of teaching in physical education beyond simply the technical aspects of teaching and learning. She focused equally on those characteristics and competencies of the teacher and the student, as well as on the learning environment or the "ecology of the gym" (p. 492). It is clear that in her work she established a wide spectrum of categories to consider in researching the area of physical education instruction and that she has presented numerous informative insights.

Reflective Practice

Experience and meaningful reflection also play significant roles in shaping and helping most teachers to develop further, including those individuals specifically coveting a career as a physical education teacher. Schon (1991) stated that, in his experience of studying teachers' belief systems and their attitudes towards reflection, "teachers learn to teach by teaching" (p. 183). Perhaps this could be the reason that many preservice education students comment on how wonderful their practica experiences are compared to the campus-based courses required beforehand.

Reflection is possible in those moments when we are able to think about our experiences, about what we did or should have done, about why things happened as they did, or about what we might do next. Reflection is a fundamental concept in educational theory, and at a very basic level reflection is another word for *thinking*. Reflection in the field of education carries the connotation of deliberation, making choices, coming to decisions about alternative courses of action. It occurs in such phrases as *reflective teaching*, *critical reflective practice*, and *reflection in action* (Van Manen, 1991).

Van Manen (1991) described reflective teaching in different ways. As conscientious practitioners, teachers can consciously embark upon a process of thinking and improving upon their profession through what he called critical reflective practice. As well, he used the term reflection in action, which implies that teachers are in constant interaction with their learning-teaching environments, which allows them to be critically reflective of any and all parts of their teaching at any time.

Schon (1991) also writes about reflection-in-action. He extends the meaning given by Van Manen (1991). To Schon (1991), it is a process with nonlogical features prompted by experience over which we have limited control. For teachers, the essence of reflection-in-action is the "hearing" or "seeing" of what students say or do in the context of learning. This intuitiveness is a process that Schon called *reframing*. The form of reflection that involves reframing is very different from the more familiar form, which Schon termed *reflection-on-action*. This refers to the ordered, deliberate, and systematic application of logic to a problem to resolve it; the process is very much within our control. The sort of thinking characterized by reflection-on-action involves careful consideration of familiar information. In contrast, reflection-in-action presents the

information quite differently, so that it appears in a novel frame. Thus, what control we can exercise comes through on reflection-in-action when we think systematically about the freshly framed data.

Schon's (1991) reframing is an integral part of a cycle in the development of a teacher's professional knowledge, and with experience a teacher is better able to develop and revise theories in action to better address the reframing that needs to occur to enhance student and teacher learning.

Summary

This section was intended to introduce the factors affecting teacher development and the role of reflection in teacher development from the perspectives of some of the leading writers and scholars in the field. The specific topics are broad and multifaceted; however, they are vital components of the attributes of physical education teachers and the overall development of these subject specialists. The next section delves into the specific characteristics of effective physical education teachers and is followed by a section on the characteristics of exceptional teachers of physical education.

Characteristics of Effective Physical Education Teachers

Every teacher's skill and effectiveness result from a combination of many personal and professional characteristics. Numerous studies have been conducted to identify these characteristics in physical education teachers (Ballinger, 1993; Behets, 1997; Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002; Carlisle & Phillips, 1984; Harrison, 1987; Mawer, 1995; Rolider, Siedentop, & Van Houten, 1984; Stirling & Belk, 2002; Zounhia, Emmanouel, Kossiva, & Hatziharistos, 2002). During an extensive review of the literature, six main themes became significant in the discussions of the effectiveness of

physical education teachers: (a) management and organizational skills, (b) learning environment, (c) relationship with students, (d) teaching strategies and styles of communication, (e) professional qualities, and (f) personal qualities of effective teachers.

Management and Organizational Skills

According to Beighle and Pangrazi (2002), "Effectiveness as an educator is dependent on a teacher's ability to manage a class" (p. 6). Managing a class may take many different forms. The use of a timeline, for example, to determine the best way to distribute class time throughout a lesson is a strategy used by highly effective teachers. Stirling and Belk (2002) suggested, "An effective teacher will strive to minimize the time spent on non-learning activities" (p. 72). These activities can be considered noninstructional time or transition and/or organization time.

Researchers have generally agreed that an effective physical education teacher reduces management and organization time to create more practice time to enhance learning (Ballinger, 1993; Behets, 1997; Mawer, 1995). Moreover, Ballinger found that "effective teachers provide a variety of tasks during independent practice times, thereby maintaining student interest" (p. 13). As well, Behets concluded, "When teachers provide more practice time, students have more opportunities to learn and obtain greater learning gains in their particular learning setting" (p. 218).

Research has also shown that effective physical education teachers manage classes in ways that increase academic learning time. By minimizing the time spent on nonacademic tasks, providing transitions between activities, and dealing with disruptions; effective teachers can increase the amount of time that students spend on practicing skills and improving techniques (Harrison, 1987; Mawer, 1995). Mawer also claimed that

effective teachers are thorough in their planning and that, through establishing class procedures and routines for teaching, they minimize the kinds of tasks that often distract teachers and students alike.

Lesson planning is another important aspect of being an effective teacher that contributes to the overall management and organization of a class (Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002). Ballinger (1993) noted, "Effective teachers plan each lesson thoroughly, and hold students accountable for learning" (p. 13). Beighle and Pangrazi came to a similar conclusion: "Lesson planning allows teachers to choose the most efficient teaching style for the lesson or activities within a lesson" (p. 8).

Learning Environment

The learning environment is a crucial area where effective physical educators can create positive experiences for students. The strategies can range from implementing a mandatory participation rule that would negate any elimination type of games to focusing on the affective domain of learning by stressing teamwork and cooperation in every class. Thus, as Harrison (1987) observed, "The effective teacher creates a supportive learning environment in which students are treated as individuals and in which they know that help is available (p. 41). Mawer (1995) and Harrison (1987) also found that effective teachers maintain a strong academic focus within the context of a pleasant, friendly classroom. Students are excited about learning in this context and understand that their teacher is available for any needed support.

Effective teachers tend to be perceptive about their surroundings and very adept at moving around the physical environment and consistently scanning the entire class. Behets (1997), for example, found that "effective teachers spend more time [than do

other teachers] moving around their learning environment" (p. 219) and rarely stay in one position for too long. Stirling and Belk (2002) also supported the importance of positioning oneself to always be able to clearly see the entire learning environment: "Effective teachers seem to always maintain a position from which to scan all students" (p. 71). Students are more accountable and less likely to be off task when the teacher interacts with them and to work more diligently when they know that the teacher can see them during class time (Hastie & Siedentop, 1999).

Management of the learning environment is also important and includes the proper use and setup of equipment. Effective teachers are efficient when setting up or putting away required equipment. They generally make far fewer adjustments to athletic equipment and perform transitions within the class much more quickly than do less effective teachers (Behets, 1997; Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002). Effective physical education teachers use sports equipment in appropriate and varied ways to suit the individual needs of every pupil in a class. The misuse or inappropriate use of designated equipment rarely, if ever, occurs in the classrooms of effective teachers.

Relationship With Students

The relationship with students is a third theme that deserves attention in a discussion of the effectiveness of a physical education teacher. Teachers who are accepting regard all students with respect in spite of their behavior or achievement level. These teachers may reject inappropriate behaviors, but they separate behaviors from the judgmental labeling of students (Ballinger, 1993; Zounhia et al., 2002). Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) believed that "effective teachers always treat children with respect and will speak with the child quickly, privately, and in a quiet tone addressing the behavior of

the child" (p. 7). Similarly, O'Sullivan and Dyson (1994) noted, "One of the key factors of successful PE teachers is the quickness and accuracy with which teachers identify and act upon student misbehavior" (p. 366).

In shaping students' behavior, teachers should set a goal students can achieve and then build on their successes while achieving it. The key is to match the students' current achievement levels with the task-difficulty level so that they will over learn the material and thus retain it (Harrison, 1987). As Harrison wrote, "An effective teacher has high expectations" and perceives students "as being capable of learning and [himself or herself] as being capable of teaching effectively" (p. 38). This balance between finding a student's current skill level and creating a learning environment that suits his or her particular needs is a difficult task, yet effective teachers routinely achieve it to maximize the learning potential of every student on a class-by-class basis.

Teaching Strategies and Styles of Communication

A fourth factor that contributes to the effectiveness of a physical education teacher is the use of specific teaching strategies and styles of communication. Although many alternative forms of instruction exist and are advocated through research findings, the spectrum of styles that Mosston (1966) introduced represents the most prominent framework of alternative instructional styles in physical education. Effective teachers often apply a variety of teaching styles in their lessons to appeal to all types of learners (Mawer, 1995; Stirling & Belk, 2002). Several researchers have confirmed that employing different instructional styles may enhance student achievement and that teachers trained in the different styles are more likely to engage learners, provide feedback, and generally enhance the learning of all students (Ashworth, 1984). The most

effective teachers select material at an appropriate level of difficulty for their students and efficiently move the students through this material (Harrison, 1987). As well, conscientious and thoughtful teachers are considerate of their learners and realize that all students are individuals and thus, require that information be clearly and precisely communicated. Ballinger (1993) noted, "Effective teachers take time to explain the rules, discuss them, and change rules which appear to be unjust" (p. 15).

Students learn best in situations where they receive the majority of their instruction from the teacher and do better in these situations than do those expected to learn on their own or from each other (Harrison, 1987). Furthermore, instructions given to students must be appropriately suited to the age of the learners, and clarity must be duly considered. Stirling and Belk (2002), for example, found that "effective teachers communicate content clearly and concisely" (p. 72) with brief and efficient demonstrations while continuously checking for student understanding. As well, Ballinger (1993) stated, "Effective teachers tailor the level of information to the readiness of each individual student and also include careful task analysis in their planning and check for prerequisite skills" (p. 14). Ultimately, student learning and skill acquisition are most important for the majority of physical education teachers, and, as Stirling and Belk discovered, "An effective teacher will ensure students have mastered prerequisite skills before introducing more complex tasks and activities" (p. 74).

The tone of voice and the manner in which effective teachers address students are other important factors to consider. Students appreciate a respectful tone and gladly follow the instructions of a teacher who communicates thoughtfully and respectfully. Effective teachers provide specific, positive reinforcement, which includes both verbal

and nonverbal expressions (Behets, 1997; Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002; Mawer, 1995). In summary, effective teachers say what needs to be said succinctly and clearly and do not spend time on off-task behavior unless they must do so.

Professional Qualities

If the results of Vertinsky's (1989) study are accepted as valid, teachers who enjoy teaching and believe that they know more about it are more predisposed to acquire additional knowledge than are those who believe that they know less. Thus, knowledge acquisition may invigorate teachers and generate in them an even greater desire to learn and to apply this knowledge to increase their teaching effectiveness.

Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) suggested that "effective teachers are consistently seeking improvements in their teaching" (p. 9) and, furthermore, that effective teachers continually search for enrichment opportunities and are rarely, if ever, satisfied with their performances as teachers. Mawer (1995) stated that effective physical educators are rarely completely satisfied with their teaching and that they typically strive for improvement in their practice.

Many effective teachers model behaviors of leadership, but not dictatorship, and encourage student input into decision-making (Ballinger, 1993). Student involvement in the learning process has many benefits. It can lead to, for example, increased participation and improved motivation, which ultimately lead to feelings of higher intrinsic value and worth. Ballinger also found that many effective teachers review their materials and discuss their teaching and plans with colleagues. This shared planning is popular among many elementary school teachers, who are often forced to share the same learning environment because of limited time and space.

Byra and Coulon (1994) discovered that teachers who planned lessons had significantly fewer instances of off-task student behavior, less time wasted because of students waiting in lines, and overall greater instructional time. Teachers whom Stroot and Morton (1989) characterized as effective considered objectives prior to determining activities. Further, the effective teachers were less plan dependent while engaged in the act of teaching, which is a behavior that the investigators attributed to greater confidence.

Zounhia et al. (2002) saw a strong correlation between the knowledge of the subject of physical education and the ability to present this knowledge in appropriate and meaningful lessons. The primary-level teachers who participated in Zounhia et al.'s study showed enthusiasm for the subject and a desire to work collaboratively. These qualities demonstrate the professionalism of the generalist teacher and the value that some teachers place on physical education.

A common component of professionalism is reflection, which many effective teachers practice to improve all facets of teaching. Many skilled physical education teachers have become reflective educators because of their openness and willingness to admit their faults and because they seriously contemplate and critically analyze their practice. As Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) noted, "Reflection allows successful teachers to alter their teaching, to enhance efficiency, improve management, or improve the quality of the lesson" (p. 9).

Reflection is a fundamental concept in educational theory and has a significant role in shaping and helping all teachers to further develop all aspects of their professional lives. It is thinking about teaching and acting on those thoughts that allow a teacher to improve upon his or her practice. As Van Manen (1991) explained, reflection in the field

of education carries the connotation of deliberation and coming to decisions about alternative courses of action.

Personal Qualities

The final theme that emerged from the review of the literature regarding the effectiveness of physical educators pertains to the personal qualities of highly effective physical education teachers, who consistently display positive personality traits and inviting personal characteristics. The level of approachability of a teacher and his or her personality often either attract students to a teacher or repel them. Ballinger (1993) reported, "Effective teachers know how to actively listen while interacting with students. These teachers are generally communicative, empathetic and maintain a sense of humor" (p. 17). Usually, these teachers are appealing to students and able to create a supportive and inviting learning environment.

Behets' (1997) findings clearly show that the personal qualities of a physical education teacher have a significant impact in creating a successful and efficient learning environment: "The most effective teachers do not spend a lot of attention on pupil behavior" and "spend less time . . . and less attention on informing their pupils [than other teachers do]" (pp. 221-223).

Although only two studies have emerged from the literature that pertain to teacher enthusiasm as a personal quality of an effective physical education teacher, the initial findings are encouraging. Carlisle and Phillips (1984) found that students of teachers of physical education who were enthusiastic displayed significantly higher achievement results in their physical education classes. As well, Rolider et al. (1984) reported a strong

correlation between enthusiastic teaching behaviors and overall student performance in skill-based activities and content acquisition.

Summary

In this section I have discussed the characteristics of effective physical education teachers. Understanding what makes a teacher of physical education effective can be beneficial for practicing physical education teachers and those still studying in professional faculties; however, simply knowing the blueprint for an effective physical education teacher is not enough to become highly effective. The combination of knowing oneself as an educator and understanding the key factors that lead to success as a physical education teacher may help a motivated and conscientious physical education teacher to improve his or her practice. Fenstermacher (1979) stressed that a critical difference exists between *studying* what makes teachers effective and *teaching* to be effective. However, effective teachers can learn to be more effective and even exceptional.

Characteristics of Exceptional Teaching of Physical Education

What is an "exceptional" or "expert" teacher? According to Corbin (1993), "Expertise in the discipline is not, by itself, sufficient qualification to be considered a quality practitioner" (p. 86). This important statement causes one to ponder the merits of exceptional teaching and the label *exceptional.* What are the characteristics of such an individual who teaches in the area of physical education? The challenge of describing the difference between an effective teacher and an exceptional or 'expert' teacher is difficult, and it evokes interest and creates passionate discussion among educators and students alike. However, certain teachers are generally perceived as being "above the rest"

because of their ability to teach students and convey superior knowledge in a specific subject area.

In my review of the literature I found three recent major studies that addressed exceptional teaching within the field of physical education. An analysis of this literature identified seven prominent themes, including: a) relevant experience, b) a quest for knowledge, c) value of the student, d) planning, e) the classroom ecology, f) attention to detail (with-it-ness), and g) the desire to always improve. Some of these themes were also included in the previous section in the discussion of characteristics of *effective* teachers. The three themes—relationship with students, management and organizational skills, and learning environment—from effective teaching are similar to the following three themes identified for exemplary teaching of physical education: (a) valuing and treating students respectfully, (b) appropriate planning, and (c) maintaining positive classroom ecology. Although there are similar themes, to maintain consistency with the literature, the terms identified in the literature are those that I will discuss here.

Expertise can be thought of as an extension of effective teaching and represents a level beyond it. Effectiveness combines superior teaching skills with an extensive understanding of the subject matter (Siedentop & Eldar, 1994). Defining expertise is difficult, but it relies on factors such as years of experience, evaluation by school authorities, reputation, and knowledge of the subject matter (Pieron & Carreiro da Costa, 1996). According to Manross and Templeton (1997), "Expertise is developed through experience, practice, and knowledge. Only through classroom experience do teachers have the opportunity to practice different and effective teaching methods" (p. 33). Simply knowing the characteristics and qualities of an expert cannot make one an expert. As

well, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that expertise in one dimension does not generalize readily to other domains (Glaser & Chi, 1988).

Relevant Experience

Experience is key for a teacher to become an expert teacher. Expert teachers are skilled at drawing from their experience to offer various forms of feedback to their students that is often spontaneous, credible, and shared creatively (Manross & Templeton, 1997). Pieron and Carreiro da Costa (1996) stated:

> Experts are seen as highly motivated to learn and seem to have learned more from their own teaching experience than ordinary teachers. They have a better memory of what they learned and they connect more efficiently with other aspects of their knowledge. (p. 10)

Researchers who have examined how experience influences teacher development, both over time and as a result of specific encounters, have conclusively demonstrated that experience has the potential to enhance teaching quality. The results from one study that compared preservice teachers with experienced teachers indicate that experienced teachers made more instructional decisions in planning lessons, focused on individual student performance, and possessed knowledge structures that were rich in strategies associated with quality instruction (Housner & Griffey, 1985).

Experts continually draw from their experiences when forced to deal with a problem or a new situation, whereas novice teachers base most of their actions and responses on textbook responses and theories (Chorney, 2000; Pieron & Carreiro da Costa, 1996). According to Tan (1997), "The degree of excellence that experts have gained is crafted by extensive knowledge and skills that are amassed over years of experience" (p. 31). Although experience is generally assumed to equate with having

spent time within the profession, no one can determine how much time needs to be spent teaching to acquire "adequate" experience. Chorney (2000) noted that the survey responses of teachers with 2 to 5 years of experience were not significantly different from those of teachers with over 20 years of experience in teaching physical education.

Moreover, Pieron and Carreiro da Costa (1996) found that an expert's knowledge "is structured in sophisticated and complex ways that make it easy and economical to recall and apply" and that "experts recall more easily and appropriately their knowledge and transfer it more easily to unusual situations [than do nonexperts]" (p. 10). Tan's (1997) findings were similar: "Experts can remember and recall a great deal of information about their subject, both short-term and long-term" (p. 32). This ability can be attributed to a number of factors, including the inherent skill of memory recall or simply the experience of having taught a subject for so long that many examples can be thought of instantly. Nevertheless, although expertise typically is developed as a function of experience, experience alone is not a sufficient condition for expertise.

Quest for Additional Knowledge and Analysis

General pedagogical knowledge represents what a teacher understands about the principles and strategies that are designed to guide class instruction, organization, and management (Shulman, 1987). Although pedagogical knowledge has received less attention than other forms of teacher knowledge, it is central to the development of expertise (Dodds, 1994; Siedentop & Eldar, 1994).

The quest for additional content knowledge and the deep level of analysis that most experts demonstrate through reflective practice are joint factors in the profile of an exceptional teacher: "Because experts know the importance of their own personal

understanding of the subject matter, they go to great lengths to increase their knowledge base prior to teaching" (Manross & Templeton, 1997, p. 32). As well, experts tend to invest a great deal of time in identifying, defining, and analyzing a problem before searching for a solution; that is, reflecting, and "when making decisions or solving problems, experts sort, identify, and analyze the essential factors with precision and proficiency" (Tan, 1997, p. 31). Continual self-improvement is a common characteristic among highly driven professionals in the field of education, for they rarely remain satisfied with their level and depth of general pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, or pedagogical content knowledge.

Valuing Students

Expert teachers also regularly attend to the individual needs of their students and use a variety of teaching styles to benefit student learning. Ballinger (1993) revealed, "Expert instructors communicate new information to students using multiple examples and styles of teaching which match the learning style of students" (p. 14). This approach is pedagogically sound because all learners are unique and, in many cases, require information to be explained in more than one way. According to Manross and Templeton (1997), expert teachers are able to "easily outline logical and detailed skill progressions and concepts, beginning with the simple and leading to the complex" (p. 30). These findings are encouraging because many teachers of physical education simply use a direct method of instruction that does not permit the students to be creative and have input into their own learning (Behets, 1997).

According to the pupils' responses in Pieron and Carreiro da Costa's (1996) study, "The expert teachers used multiple techniques to a greater extent than the novice

teachers to help students to understand the activity" (p. 13). Similarly, Manross and Templeton (1997) suggested that "expert teachers search for new and fresh methods for teaching familiar subject matter, while less expert teachers settle for business as usual" (p. 33). These points are valuable to remember for all physical education teachers and, perhaps more specifically, for those undergraduate students preparing to begin their careers in the area.

In a study on exceptional teachers, Manross and Templeton (1997) reported findings that are valuable for instructors at all levels of education. Perhaps the most significant finding was that exceptional teachers have a strong commitment to all learners in their classes and are dedicated to connecting with all students in every possible way. Not only is connecting with every student important for overall learning, but also, as an added benefit, doing so minimizes management issues and efficiently uses class time. Thus, Manross and Templeton concluded, "Expert teachers focus attention on individual student needs and performances while at the same time running a smooth and effective classroom" (p. 34).

Planning for Instruction

As a technical skill, expert teachers often carry out planning well in advance by thinking long term (Manross & Templeton, 1997). Pieron and Carreiro da Costa (1996) found that subject-area experts often have a greater propensity for planning progressive learning activities and contingency plans than other teachers do. As well, Manross and Templeton remarked, "Experts find a variety of ways for effectively communicating instructions, goals, and objectives" (p. 32). Experts are also capable and highly skilled at creating highly organized, yet flexible plans with various activity alternatives and

explanations for students. The basic lessons are detailed and flexible and allow for easy interpretation by other teachers.

Similarly, Griffey and Housner (1991) found that planning changes with experience. Not surprisingly, experienced teachers ask more questions prior to planning and show greater concern for contingencies that may occur during the lesson.

As a skill unto itself, planning is seen as an integral part of good teaching, and for all exceptional teachers of physical education it is an integral part of their practice. The value placed on planning is extremely high, and as Manross and Templeton (1997) noted, "Expert teachers strive to form a clear, thorough picture of what they are going to do in a lesson, who they are going to teach, and what equipment they will use" (p. 29).

Classroom Ecology

The learning environment of expert teachers is generally quite relaxed, with an air of efficiency pervading it. As expert teachers hover over their environment, they tend to be proactive in giving specific and meaningful feedback to their students (Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002; Manross & Templeton, 1997). This ability to see everything and have a strong sense of classroom dynamics is key to ensuring the forward progress of the lesson and, ultimately, student learning.

For exceptional teachers of physical education, the time spent in a typical class tends to be thought through quite deliberately so that all of the time allocated for a specific class is accounted for in advance. As Manross and Templeton (1997) noted, "Experts often have established routines for starting and stopping class, managing student activity, distributing equipment, etc." (p. 32). Almost everything that may happen in a

typical lesson has been thought through to avoid confusion and wasting valuable class time.

Pieron and Carreiro da Costa (1996) found that the amount of time that pupils were engaged in their learning was strikingly higher in classes managed by expert teachers and that "the pupils of expert teachers [were] more often invited to understand the skills and the concepts taught [than were the pupils of other teachers]" (p. 10). In presenting tasks to students, expert teachers completed their information sharing much quicker and with greater clarity than did novice teachers (Pieron & Carreiro da Costa, 1996). Although younger or less experienced teachers often try to be firm and structured within their working environment, they lack the flexibility and confidence that generally develop with experience. Of course, novice teachers can be effective in their teaching; however, they tend to be more rigid with their plans than are expert teachers and tend to feel less secure about breaking away from their plans if a lesson is not working.

With-it-ness (Attention to Detail)

Another theme that emerged from the literature on expertise in teaching physical education is exceptional teachers' intuitiveness and general sense of astute awareness. For example, Tan (1997) stated, "Experts see details or information that other people either miss or dismiss" (p. 31). This awareness of every detail within a class may be inherent and a characteristic possibly possessed by only exceptional teachers. The limited research conducted on classroom management indicated that teachers who exhibit "with-it-ness"—that is, prompt, accurate, and appropriate teacher responses to student actions (Kounin, 1970)—appear to have greater student compliance (Johnson, 1995).

A structured process of observation is another technique that exceptional teachers use during their teaching more often than other teachers do. Experts quickly perceive large clusters of information and "see things in a different and more insightful light. They extract meaningful cues from the instructional context that allow them to understand events in ways that help them plan and teach more effectively" (Tan, 1997, p. 32). Similarly, Manross and Templeton (1997) stated, "Experts are acutely aware of what is happening in their classes and why," and "experts can detect slight but significant shifts in the learning environment, which foretell events to come" (p. 31).

Desire to Improve Practice

Another quality that tends to set apart the expert teacher of physical education from the effective educator is the internal drive to continually improve while maintaining a humble and often "low-key" attitude. Highly competent teachers hold themselves accountable for students who have difficulty learning, but novice teachers tend to believe that they know most if not all of what they need to know about their craft (Manross & Templeton, 1997; Pieron & Carreiro da Costa, 1996). Undergraduate students' or novice teachers' perceptions of their competency often result from their previous successes as athletes or coaches and their enthusiasm for effecting change in students. These teachers' ability to admit shortcomings early in their careers is clouded by their personal perception of already being skilled and knowledgeable enough in all areas of the field.

To develop expertise, teachers must continually reflect on and question the rationale underlying their decisions, and, according to Tan (1997), "experts objectively and honestly assess and identify their shortcomings and knowledge deficiencies" (p. 32). This highly admirable characteristic is not often found in novice or generally "average"

teachers because of lack of experience and limited engagement with their teaching, respectively.

Although reflective practice represents one of the most widely discussed areas it is probably the least investigated (or evaluated) areas of inquiry in physical education. The findings suggest that reflection may promote connections within the knowledge structures of preservice teachers (Byra, 1996; Sebren, 1995). Additionally, it has been shown to be a more meaningful practice with a more sustained effect when it is utilized by teachers with relevant experience (Schon, 1991). It is also clear that some of the skills required for reflection can be taught and the act itself at least encouraged, although some strategies have particular advantages over others (Byra, 1996; Tsangaridou & O'Sullivan, 1994). The act of journal writing, for example, allows teachers to put their thoughts and musings into print form and creates a paper trail that can be read and reread by the reflective teacher. These journal entries can be the basis for initiating change in a teacher's job, as well as a means to set future goals for improving one's practice.

The Future of the Field of Physical Education

The past two decades have witnessed growing sophistication in research design, the evolution of qualitative research as a valued paradigm, increasing interest in theoretically driven research, acceptance of student voice as a significant area of inquiry, and the definition of more sophisticated research questions concerning the improvement of instruction and enhancement of achievement (Graber, 2001). However, researchers have found evidence that suggests that the future of physical education is in jeopardy and that if physical education is to keep pace with researchers from other academic areas and specific subject areas, then its scholars must do better to broaden its scope of research

topics as well as to be more open to branching out into the qualitative research paradigm as a means of finding answers to more personal and deeply rooted questions (Graber, 2001).

For this study I reviewed literature relating to teacher development and reflection, qualities of effective and exceptional physical education teachers, and the overall outlook for the subject area. From the most current views and interpretations available, a common theme continued to emerge that depicted a bleak future for the field of physical education and the current status of the subject in today's schools. This current research has provided strong evidence of a sense of despair on both the national and the international fronts. The research has portrayed a negative future for physical education as a field; however, practicing physical education teachers can play a significant role in improving the current condition, as can all faculty and other instructors in preservice teacher education programs related to physical education instruction. This chapter concludes with a long section on some of today's leading researchers' recommendations for improvements to the field.

The findings from a worldwide survey on physical education in schools indicated "a wide spread concern for the future of school PE" (Hardman & Marshall, 2000, p. 11). As well, according to Hardman and Marshall, enrollments in physical education declined significantly in the 1990s, and in the United States, "only 19% of American high school students [were] active for 20 minutes or more in daily PE classes" (p. 11). According to Carlson (1995), one out of five students reported feeling alienated and unhappy with his or her physical education experience. At best, physical education in many countries has a tenuous place in the school curriculum. Physical education in these countries is

marginalized and not accepted on par with other more seemingly "academic" subjects concerned with developing a child's intellect (Hardman & Marshall, 2000).

Some of the more openly stated, specific concerns regarding the perceived negative future of physical education relate to the funding cuts in physical education programs, the lack of adequate facilities and equipment, the group of teachers generally ill-educated at the elementary level, and the secondary teachers whose limited education enables them to instruct only introductory units in a variety of games and sports (Hardman & Marshall, 2000).

A common belief is that many physical education teachers cannot decide what they want to achieve in their teaching (Siedentop, 2002b). This problem is glaringly obvious when one steps into a gymnasium and observes an often game-oriented activity that utilizes some type of ball. A definitive goal or rationale exists for physical education curriculum within all Canadian provinces; however, the particular outcomes or objectives are often not planned for or, in some cases, even known by the physical education teachers themselves. According to Penney (1999), the primary focus of physical education should be the education of children in and through physical activities and contexts, but the activity-based structure of many countries' curricula has neither clearly expressed nor adequately supported the development of children.

The literature and current research findings on the preservice education of future physical educators have shown a need to introduce a more specific content knowledge base. Siedentop (2002a) remarked, "Physical education is a school subject for which colleges prepare teachers but do not recognize physical education as a subject field" (p. 371). Siedentop believed that professionals in the field share the feeling that the

content knowledge domain for physical education has not been easily identified and that many teacher educators in physical education have largely given up the historic content knowledge of our field. If preservice teachers have studied only kinesiology and have devoted few academic credit hours to developing direct expertise in varied sports, they will fail as teachers of physical education no matter how well they are prepared in the pedagogical domain (Siedentop, 2002b).

The discipline of kinesiology is not taught in schools, and therefore it cannot logically serve as the content knowledge base for preprofessional preparation in physical education. Hardman and Marshall (2000) found that, in many countries and universities, adequate classes were not being provided in terms of the quality of the content and that the quantity of classes needed to be increased to properly educate future teachers of physical education. Some locations cited in this study's findings were New Zealand, the Australian state of Victoria, and the primary teacher-training schools of England. If countries from all over the world are being identified as providing inadequate preparatory experiences for their future physical education teachers, is it any wonder that the field of physical education is losing credibility and graduating generally unprepared teachers of the subject?

Siedentop (2002b) believed that the current lack of a thorough learning and understanding of sport performance has led to several generations of teachers who are ill-equipped to teach anything beyond a beginning unit of activity. The decision to develop numerous physical education curricula offering a plethora of activity units in a short time may have crippled our ability to achieve certain important goals. For Penney (1999), physical education, like other school-based curricula, has remained virtually unchanged

in structure for too many years. Professionals in the field for far too long have not seriously questioned the benefits of a primarily activity-based program that focuses on learning only sports. Instead, a focus on appropriate and skilled movement, using sports as a "vehicle" to improve psychomotor abilities, should have been considered. Because physical education has remained relatively unchanged for so long, it has been and continues to be viewed as just a mere collection of physical activities (Penney, 1999).

The findings of researchers such as Hardman and Marshall (2000), Penney (1999), and Siedentop (2002a) indicate that we have arrived at a point in history where we have been preparing teachers who are pedagogically more skillful then ever, but in many cases are so unprepared in the content area that they would be described as ignorant if this area were a purely cognitive knowledge field.

Perhaps the responsibility of teachers is ultimately the key component of the success or failure of physical education in schools. My research delved into the topic much more thoroughly; however, with regard to the current plight of the subject area, the research literature placed a heavy responsibility and blame on the practicing teachers of physical education.

The teachers of physical education are themselves a significant factor in how well or how poorly physical education is perceived by the public and ultimately valued by students. In teaching physical education, teachers must be passionate about their responsibility and thoroughly plan how they hope to help their learners to achieve success. Studies have shown that the most typical task-development pattern is *informing*, followed by *applying tasks*, with less attention paid to *extending tasks* and very little to

refining tasks, two skills that, arguably, are the building blocks of successful skill development (Hastie & Siedentop, 1999).

Many teachers gain and maintain student cooperation in the managerial system by reducing demands in the instructional system. *Trading off* is the situation where teachers negotiate with students to produce the necessary cooperation in the managerial system by reducing the demands of the instructional system (Hastie & Siedentop, 1999, p. 18). Studies in physical education have shown consistently that the instructional task system is frequently "low risk" (Hastie & Siedentop, 1999). Penney (1999) found that many new teachers lacked an understanding of the nature of the subject and its purpose in the broader curriculum. They saw each activity and game as areas of learning in their own right, with little or no consideration of how the elements in the different areas were complementary.

Siedentop (2002a) and Tinning (2002) reported that physical education teachers have been in a sea of confusion for many years. No two could agree on what should be taught, and what passed for physical education at any particular school was likely to depend on the whims of the teacher. It has become increasingly clear that, in many schools anything is acceptable in the name of physical education, from darts to Frisbee and billiards (Siedentop, 2002a). Some researchers argued that if this sort of smorgasbord of activities continued much longer, physical educators would be considered simply as arrangers, coordinators, and managers of primarily recreational activities. Thus Hoffman (1988) commented, "If physical education teachers had any special talent at all, it seemed to be the ability to teach a broad range of skills at an introductory level in environments that promised little hope of success" (p. 128).

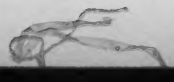
A major issue that Hardman and Marshall (2000) raised with regard to practicing teachers was the quality of the instruction—or, more important, the lack of quality instruction—of many physical education instructors worldwide. The quality of delivery of the physical education curriculum is fundamental to the future of the subject, yet a common problem in almost every country that was studied was a lack of expertise in generalist teachers at the primary levels and secondary specialists who often were just supervising organized play and games.

Recommendations for the Future of Physical Education

Although much of the literature on the future of physical education is disheartening, many concerned professionals and researchers have proposed numerous recommendations for improving it. These far-reaching recommendations have direct implications for teacher educators, practicing teachers, and the wider community. The following researchers and professionals in the field are passionate about their work and have dedicated much of their careers to the refinement and improvement of physical education and its many facets.

For Corbin (1993), disciplinary knowledge, or the depth of knowledge of numerous sports and activities, along with the biomechanical understanding of appropriate movement, is the essential foundation of our field. Only those well-grounded in the discipline can become true professionals. He believed that we must unite around common goals and that, to achieve these goals, we must "appreciate the importance of different roles played by those in the disciplines and the professions" (p. 87).

Penney (1999) suggested that we should consider moving towards a thematic rather than an activity-based curriculum. A thematically-structured curriculum is



preferable not only for educational purposes, but also to address the long-standing, ever-increasing pragmatic concerns about teaching in physical education by strengthening the case for the contribution of physical education to the whole curriculum.

Tinning (2002) believed that a more philosophical change is needed to improve school physical education. He argued that fewer activities and choices should be given and that educators should be more aware that substantive learning occurs along with real skill acquisition. Tinning also recommended that our PETE programs might consider the issue of selecting students for the program as a strategy to potentially improve the future teachers of physical education: "Perhaps we would be wise to choose not just individuals well skilled in athletics and games, but a wider range of applicants with more and varied life experiences" (p. 389).

Siedentop (2002b) called for physical education departments in universities to develop undergraduate programs that focus on the performance of skills, such as programs in dance or music, where performance is unapologetically allowed to take center stage. Both Siedentop and, 20 years earlier, Locke, Mand, and Siedentop (1981) argued that we should insist that undergraduate students acquire a range of movement skills far more extensive than they will be called upon to teach in the public schools.

Perhaps the most important lessons for the future involve the teacher's capacity to *unlearn* and *adapt to uncertainty*. In other words, we need to not hold on too tightly to traditional practices, which include instructing students in only a few chosen sports and not providing a choice of options. As well, the teacher's use of more than just a direct method of instruction will positively affect all learners, for the responsibility of learning will be shared by both the teacher and the student.

In general, the significant challenge for physical education is to discontinue teaching traditional physical education activities (i.e., basketball, football, and track and field) in traditional ways that will continue to be inadequate and, rather, to make connections to the lives of postmodern youth and the significant participants in physical culture so that physical education might become more relevant and meaningful.

CHAPTER 3:

MAPPING THE RESEARCH DIRECTION

The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice. (George Elliot, 1819-1880)

My Research Journey

In my career as a researcher and educator, I have had the opportunity to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research, but only very recently have I discovered the depth and richness that qualitative study can provide. Having studied and conducted research at an internationally recognized faculty of education in Western Canada, I have gained a much deeper appreciation for qualitative studies while continuing to appreciate the benefits of a positivistic view and the strengths of quantitative research. My current focus of study has allowed me to realize that no one grand narrative or definitive and unquestionable "truth" exists. Instead, many truths can be formulated specific to the individual researcher, his or her question(s), and the study's context. I have gained a true appreciation for qualitative research, along with a respect for the benefits that quantitative research can provide.

The Guidance of Qualitative Research

Almost every researcher, scholar, or graduate student who reads and writes about research paradigms and knowledge formulation provides a unique definition of *qualitative research*. Ball (1990) stated that qualitative research is "a plunge into the unknown" (p. 157), and Erickson (1986) likened it to learning how to swim by being thrown into a pool. Any definition of qualitative research must work within the complex

historical field from which it has emerged, because qualitative research has been interpreted differently throughout history. Nevertheless, a basic premise underlying all qualitative research is the desire to improve the understanding of all human behavior and human experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

To further clarify the meaning of qualitative research, Stake (1995) explained "in qualitative studies, research questions typically orient to cases or phenomena, seeking patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships" (p. 41). For Bogdan and Biklen (1998), qualitative researchers seek to understand the processes through which people construct and explain meanings. Qualitative researchers treat the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding (Merriam, 1998; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Stake, 1995). To facilitate the search for understanding, "qualitative researchers perceive what is happening in key episodes or testimonies, [and] represent happenings with their own direct interpretation and stories (i.e., narratives)" (Stake, 1995, p. 40). Qualitative research uses these narratives to optimize the reader's ability to understand a particular case.

Dilthey, in the late 19th century, was credited with being the first to draw a distinction between the "hard" or "natural" sciences and what he called the "human" sciences. The research methods for each, he insisted, must be different. As he explained, "Nature we can explain, but humans we must understand (*verstehen*)" (as cited in Smith, 2002, p. 187).

Throughout the history of qualitative research, investigators have always defined their work in terms of hopes and values (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research, like all research, has always been judged on the standard of whether a work

communicates or says something to us based on how we conceptualize our reality and our images of the world. *Epistemology* is the term that has historically been used to refer to the study of these standards of evaluation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined *qualitative research* as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (p. 3). This form of research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that help to make the world understandable. Just as qualitative research has many definitions, it is also referred to in many different ways: as naturalistic inquiry, interpretive research, participant observation, and inductive research. For Merriam (1998), qualitative research was an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomenon with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible.

Merriam (1998) commented, "Reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (p. 6), and qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings that people have constructed. In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine its component parts, qualitative research can reveal how all of the parts work together to form a whole. Moreover, qualitative researchers assume that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995).

In qualitative research "the key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participant's perspectives, not through the researcher's" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The internal or insider perspective and the external or outsider perspective are most often referred to by their key descriptors, the *emic* and *etic* views, respectively.

Another key characteristic of all forms of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The human researcher has characteristics that differentiate him or her from other data-collection instruments: The researcher is responsive to context, can adapt techniques to circumstances, and can consider the total context. As the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data, the researcher can respond to a situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information (Merriam, 1998).

Although a human researcher has several advantages as the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data, he or she is also limited simply by being human. Humans are more prone than other "instruments" to personal bias and other cognitive influences. Also, opportunities are sometimes missed, and personal biases may interfere in the research process (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some other recognized faults of qualitative research are that inquiries are subjective and that often "new puzzles are produced more frequently than solutions to old ones" (Stake, 1995, p. 45). The phenomena studied by qualitative researchers often take a long time to happen and evolve along the way.

For many centuries the debate has lingered on the constituents of knowledge and the existence of indisputable "truths." Aristotle made the science of "Being" the chief purpose of philosophy; however, it is and always has been very difficult to establish what Being actually is in itself. All one can do is point to what people *actually* do, how they give an account of themselves and of their place in the world, and what the world is for them. These factors result in their lived sense of Being, or what Heidegger called *Dasein*.

Having completed this study, and as I prepare to embark upon other research initiatives and qualitative research, I feel that I am prepared for what it entails and can offer me in the future. I, like many other contemporary qualitative researchers, believe that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered. I am aware that qualitative study and, in my specific situation, qualitative case study, is highly personal research. As an investigator using this approach, I know that I must include my own personal perspectives in the interpretation, but at the same time I realize that I may be confronted and challenged for doing so.

Case Study

My research uses case study as its method of data collection and analysis. Specifically, I utilize a multicase design. Situated within the qualitative research paradigm, "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003, p. 13).

Investigators use a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather than the outcomes, in the context rather than a specific variable, and in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998). Stake (1995) believed that the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. The aim is to thoroughly understand the case; thus the researcher needs to be patient, reflective, and willing to accept other points of view. In qualitative case study "we seek greater understanding of the case, its embeddedness and interaction with its contents" (p. 16).

Qualitative case studies in education are often framed with concepts, models, and theories from anthropology, history, sociology, psychology, and educational psychology (Merriam, 1998). In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are asked, when the researcher has minimal control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a specific real-life context (Yin, 2003).

As a research strategy, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, and organizational social, political, and related phenomena. The case study method "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2003, p. 2). As Yin noted, case study is particularly suited to situations in a phenomenon's variables that cannot be separated from their context.

Merriam (1998) characterized qualitative case studies in three distinct ways and sees similarities between her view and Stake's (1995) earlier description. For Merriam (1998), qualitative case studies may be

- *Particularistic:* These case studies are focused on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon. Particularistic studies focus on how particular groups of people or a specific person confronts specific problems and takes a holistic view of the situation.
- *Descriptive:* The end product of a case study is a rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon under study.

- *Heuristic:* The case study illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. The researcher can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known.

Stake (1995) claimed that knowledge learned from a case study differs from other research knowledge in four important ways. A case study is (a) more concrete and resonates with our own experiences, because the knowledge is more vivid and sensory than abstract; (b) more contextual, because all of our experiences are rooted in context; (c) more developed by the reader's interpretation; and (d) based more on specific populations determined by the reader. Readers generally have some population in mind.

I used a descriptive case study approach to guide my research. In fulfilling the requirements for qualitative case study research, my study clearly demonstrates the required characteristics. The research question investigated was designed to inquire into the professional and personal lives of physical education specialists to uncover why they engage in their practice as they do.

To be precise, the current research employed a multicase design. Because they include more than a single case, "multiple case-designs have distinct advantages and disadvantages in comparison to single-case designs. The evidence from multiple cases is often, therefore, regarded as being more robust" (Yin, 2003, p. 46). Any use of multicase designs should follow a replication, not a sampling logic, and an investigator must choose each case carefully (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

Whether a researcher uses a traditional case study or chooses a multicase design, some of the strengths and weaknesses of the case study method need to be addressed. Its unique strength is "its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents,

artifacts, interviews and observations" (Yin, 2003, p. 8). When a researcher has the opportunity to use these varied sources of evidence, any findings or conclusions in a case study are likely to be most convincing and accurate if they are based on several different sources of information and follow a corroboratory mode.

Although case studies have many strengths, the literature has also identified some limitations. Rich, thick description and analysis of a phenomenon may be desired, but a researcher may not have the time or the money to devote to such an undertaking. Case studies are limited, too, by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. Training in observation and interviewing is not readily available, but some texts can provide guidance (Kvale, 1996).

Bias may cause concern for the outside reader and needs to be discussed openly by the researcher in the context of his or her study. Bias is never completely absent from a research study, especially when the researcher is already familiar with the content area or subject field. As Merriam (1998) pointed out:

> Both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product. An unethical case writer could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated. (p. 42)

Because of the multicase design for this study, I have documented in the following chapters the commonalities among the individual cases (the four PE teachers) specific to their environments and personal teaching contexts. As Miles and Huberman (1994) explained:

> By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity and the stability of the feelings. (p. 29)

As a qualitative multicase study, this study deals with generalizations across the four cases. A general explanation was formulated that fit each individual case, even though the cases varied in their details. In accordance with Stake's (1995) recommendation, I sought "an accurate but limited understanding and [did not try] to generalize to other cases" (p. 134). In the Interpretations and Discussion section, where I provide a brief description of each participant, my intent was to offer an overview of the exemplary nature of each and to highlight some of the key factors in his or her personal development as an exemplary physical educator. As the principal researcher and writer of my specific and unique multiple case study, I offer my own interpretation. I recognize that some readers will have their own interpretations and draw personal conclusions, whereas others will value my insights and respect my explanations.

Research Methods and Procedure

Methods

As the authors of other case studies (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) have indicated, many methods of data collection can be incorporated within a case study. For the purposes of this study, I employed a process of data collection that combined interviews with observations of four participants. The major source of data was these interviews. I conducted one interview of approximately 90 minutes with each of the four participants and, in two cases I used follow-up telephone conversations to probe deeper into some of the specific questions that I had asked during the initial interview. The

interviews occurred in either the participants' personal offices or a preselected quiet and private meeting room. In each instance the participant appeared relaxed and comfortable, having chosen the location.

The interviews were semistructured and open-ended in an attempt to elicit specific responses from all participants, while at the same time allowing me, as the researcher, to probe deeper into some of the questions and to ask for further clarification or meaning of the participants' responses. Furthermore, I provided all of my research committee members with copies of my research questions, and they gave me feedback on questions that might be reworded and suggestions for additional questions that I might consider asking.

I recorded each interview with an audiocassette recorder, and it was transcribed within two days after I had completed the interview. I then returned all transcribed interview notes to the interviewee via email to ensure that the content of the data was accurate and authentic and represented exactly what the participant had said. I corroborated the interviews and the telephone conversations. The telephone conversations were brief and identified a few of the participants' responses that had not been clearly articulated during the interviews. These comments were integrated into the interview data.

I made field notes while I observed each teacher's physical education classroom. Observing them during the morning and/or afternoon of a typical school day allowed me to see how they interacted with their students, organized the classes, and taught the students. My field notes provided a means of substantiating my choice of participants. The observation of my selected participants was simply meant to verify that the

participants whom I had selected were in fact employing in practice what they had described in our interviews.

Procedures

Selection of participants. The process of selecting the participants spanned approximately six months. From the outset I wanted to involve professionals from across the province who were respected, admired, and viewed as "exceptional" teachers of physical education. I believed that, to identify such a group of individuals, I would need input from experienced and "well-connected" PE teachers and consultants throughout the province. I began to contact the various regional representatives from the provincial Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC), along with physical education consultants from the two major cities in the province. I asked these individuals to provide the names of one or two exceptional teachers of physical education from the individuals' particular region or city whom they regarded as exceptional physical education teachers. In addition, I requested that these individuals provide their rationale for selecting and putting forth the name(s) that they had.

I surmised that in the pool of names that would be provided to me some individuals might be mentioned more than once and that they would potentially be candidates whom I would want to participate in this study. As a result of my request to the consultants and regional physical education representatives to submit the names of potential research participants, I acquired a list of approximately 30 teachers from across the province. As I had anticipated, some teachers received more than one nomination.

I began the process of identifying my subject sample from the pool of submitted names. I chose to select both male and female teachers with a range of teaching

experience from a minimum of 5 years to a maximum of 35 years. This variety between gender and experience was intended to provide a diverse sample of participants and was based on the assumptions that they would be interesting to converse with and available as my study progressed. Finally, I wanted participants who taught in both the public and separate school systems and who had attended different faculties of education for their undergraduate teaching degrees.

At the conclusion of my selection, I identified two female and two male physical education teachers who varied in their experience of teaching physical education from 5 years to 25 years. As well, two teachers were employed by the separate school system, and the remaining two were employees of the public school system. Of the four teachers, two had attended the same postsecondary institution for their PETE program.

My study was delimited by the fact that I chose to invite practicing physical education teachers to participate in this study and not to include preservice students in their respective physical education classes. Although the stories and opinions of children in schools would be another valuable resource for researching the strengths and weaknesses of current physical education programs, my interest in this study was to focus on the lives and experiences of current teachers and how their practice had changed, if at all, during their careers as physical educators.

Timeline. In August 2003 the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the university at which I was enrolled approved my ethics application (Appendix A). Beginning in the fall of 2003, I contacted a few selected physical education teachers from the public and separate school systems in the city where I resided, and then I used these teachers in a pilot study to test the appropriateness and clarity of my interview questions

(Appendix B). With the knowledge gained from the input of these teachers, I modified and clarified the wording and sequencing of the questions that I would ask the participants in my research study.

I received informed consent from all of the participants, consistent with the REB standards of my university, to participate and to use their interview responses and observe their teaching. I remained in verbal and electronic communication with them from the midpoint of August 2003 through to August 2004.

After the 2003-2004 school year had begun and the research participants had settled into their routine of teaching, I coordinated both an interview and a classroom observation with each of the four teachers. The personal interviews were arranged so that they would not interfere with the teachers' personal or professional schedules and subsequently were conducted at a time and place that each teacher had chosen.

The data collected during the interviews were intended to provide an understanding of the personal and professional lives of the participants in relation to their teaching practice. Most interview questions were open-ended, which allowed the participants "maximum freedom of response" (Barone & Switzer, 1995, p. 177). They could respond to the questions and tell their stories informally to enable me to uncover hidden meanings that might otherwise not have been revealed in a more structured and formal process. Prior to interviewing the teachers, I had sent them a copy of the questions to allow them to give some forethought to their responses during the interview.

The classroom observations of each teacher occurred either prior to or immediately after the scheduled interview. The choice of the times for the observations was based on the participants' schedules and my discretion. I allocated either a half day

or a full day for the interview and the observation of each teacher's classes. I recorded my observations as field notes and focused on capturing the context of the teaching and learning environment. Although brief conversations between the teacher participants and me arose before and after the classes, I did not offer advice or suggestions about what I had observed regarding their teaching. An unbiased and honest portrayal of the classroom teacher's teaching was the primary intent and sole purpose of my presence, which was clearly explained to and acknowledged by each participant. The purpose of the observations was to verify the selection of participants.

The telephone conversations would verify a limited number of the responses from the interviews; further information was required in a few cases because some of the responses lacked valuable details.

After completing the interview and classroom observation of each research participant, I thanked them for their willingness to participate and explained that I might need to conduct an additional interview with them if further clarification was required. After transcribing each of the 90-minute interviews, I gave each participant the opportunity to verify and substantiate the accuracy of the transcribed interview data, and in all cases, when I noted no discrepancies, I began to analyze all of the data. The telephone conversations occurred within days of the conclusion of the specific interviews.

Data Analysis

Analysis and interpretation in qualitative research heavily depend on the researcher's personal background, skills, knowledge, and research experience (Best & Kahn, 2003). *Analysis* is the process of bringing order to the data by organizing them into patterns and basic descriptive units. *Interpretation* involves attaching meaning and

significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns, and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions.

Qualitative data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation (Merriam, 1998). This kind of analysis may seem like a daunting task with a high level of subjectivity, and, according to Patton (1980) "There are no formal universal rules to follow in analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating qualitative data" (p. 268).

In case studies obtaining an understanding of the case(s) is the paramount consideration in analyzing the data (Merriam, 1998). For my research analysis, I employed Merriam's series of four phases:

- **Phase 1:** I gathered the raw data from each individual case and organized and coded the transcribed interview(s) and informal field notes so that the data from each case would be easily retrievable. Yin (2003) called this organized material the case study database.
- **Phase 2—within-case analysis:** I treated each separate case as a comprehensive case in and of itself, scrutinized the data that I had gathered, and learned as much as possible about the contextual variables (the micro-themes) that might have a bearing on the case.
- **Phase 3—cross-case analysis:** I attempted to build a general explanation that fit across each individual case, even though the cases varied in their details, and to gain an understanding of how local conditions had qualified each case;

therefore, I developed more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations (macro-themes) than I had previously.

- **Phase 4:** I pondered and then scrutinized the micro-themes that emerged from each specific case. I considered macro-themes across each case and ultimately presented them in a holistic and comprehensive descriptive manner.

As I had anticipated, I had to go back and forth among the last three phases to gain the clearest and most accurate analysis and interpretation for each specific case. I based my interpretations on the findings from each specific case and compared them to those of the current research literature.

Many scholars in the area of qualitative research believed that data analysis occurs both while the data are being collected and after the data collection is complete (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Patton, 1980). I considered this point and found that I indeed had been thinking about the lives of my participants before, during, and after they had shared with me many personal stories of their experiences, both teaching and learning, in the field of physical education.

Maintaining Rigor: Establishing Trustworthiness

Throughout all of the personal interviews the researcher must maintain trustworthiness. There is always a risk that the participants will share information that they perceive to be desirable to the researcher while being less than accurate or truthful with their responses.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described four general criteria for trustworthiness to assess rigor in qualitative research: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. To address these issues, I sent a copy of all of the interview

questions to my participants at least one week prior to their interviews in the hope that they would have time to reflect upon and respond to them honestly and openly when we met. As well, my observation of the participants in their respective classrooms enabled me to document, although briefly, some of the practices and techniques that they had discussed prior to and/or after our interviews.

Credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that qualitative studies may be deemed credible when they present such realistic descriptions or interpretations of a lived experience that the people who had that experience immediately recognize it as their own. The perspectives of the involved research participants are credible if they, in fact, agree with the researcher's interpretations of their interviews.

In this study I achieved credibility by asking all four participants to read and review their transcribed interviews. This procedure is also referred to as *member checks* (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I emailed each participant a transcript of the original interview and asked him or her to read it and add to, delete, or modify the content as necessary. I established a timeline of one week for changes, and in all cases the participants responded within the week and stated that no edits needed to be made to their transcripts.

Transferability. The establishment of transferability for the qualitative researcher is based on the ability to provide a rich and "thick" description of the time and context of the findings. If the description is adequate, it should enable someone interested in making a transfer to be able to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability focuses on determining whether the study's findings have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects. The four separate cases in this study provided unique results, and after I had extensively reviewed the current literature, I was able to consider all of the content and formulate new information. Readers of this study will be able to assess its findings against the findings of other studies that inquire into the professional and personal lives of physical education specialists and why they engage in their practice as they do.

Dependability. Dependability is the third criterion used to evaluate trustworthiness. This criterion determines whether the results of a study would be consistent if another researcher attempted to replicate it with the same participants or in a similar context. Many qualitative researchers discount this criterion and consider it inappropriate for qualitative research because the uniqueness of the human condition is celebrated in this research paradigm, and variation is generally expected.

In this study, asking all four participants to verify the accuracy of the transcribed interviews enhanced dependability. I wanted to be certain that what they had said was accurately transcribed; therefore, I continued to remain in contact with them even after they had confirmed that the transcripts were accurate. All of the participants eventually verified the content of their interviews.

Confirmability. Confirmability is the fourth and final criterion used to establish trustworthiness. For this criterion to be valid, the researcher must maintain a completely open and explicit research trail. The creation of an *audit trail* has become a common technique that many qualitative researchers have used (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse & Field, 1995). Precise field notes and verbatim transcripts

provide evidence from the original data source from data analysis to final reporting. I have maintained and recorded all of my accumulated data and feel extremely comfortable about how I have organized and chosen to document my decisions and insights.

Right to Privacy

All of the participants' comments and responses and their identity and location of employment have been confidentially maintained, and pseudonyms in the form of Participant A, B, C, and D have been used to ensure anonymity.

CHAPTER 4:

PRESENTING THE FINDINGS

Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people. (William Yeats)

Introducing the Findings

In this study I explored the professional lives of four physical education specialists and sought to discover why they engage in their practices as they do. I listened to and engaged in conversations with all of these professionals and came to understand how they have developed into the type of educators that they are.

The analysis was influenced by my readings of authors such as Yin (2003) and Merriam (1998). Initially, I summarized and eventually compiled all of the interview transcripts from the four participants into one dataset. I treated each separate case as a comprehensive case in and of itself and scrutinized the data so that I was able to learn as much as possible about the contextual variables. I attempted to build a general explanation that fit across each of the individual cases, even though their details varied. My goal was to understand how each case had been qualified by local conditions and, subsequently, how each participant's teaching practice had evolved.

My organization of the data followed a scheme in which I gleaned themes from all of the transcripts and then organized these themes into four categories. A *category* is a group or collection with shared characteristics; they are presented in (Appendix C). Within each of the four categories, I identified specific themes that related to the category and had an impact on the research question of why current physical education specialists engage in their practice as they do. The categories were designated as (a) relating to/with

students, (b) experiences gained through teaching, (c) self-awareness, and (d) passion for the field of physical education.

In the following section, I introduce the four participants by outlining their backgrounds as summarized in Table 1, and illustrate the four categories listed above through the use of participant quotations. The first category describes the personal nature of the teacher/student relationship and the high value that the participants place on it, the second presents the many facets of how experience changes and shapes a teacher's being, the third describes how these teachers have evolved as a result of honest and truthful reflection on themselves and their practice, and the fourth elaborates on the participants' values and belief in their vocation as teachers of physical education.

Table 1

Background Information for All of the Participants

	Gender	Grade levels taught	Experience teaching	Location
Participant A	Male	9-12	10 years	Large Catholic high school (over 1000 students)
Participant B	Female	7-9	5 years	Small Catholic middle school (200-400 students)
Participant C	Male	K-6	15 years	Large public elementary (over 500 students)
Participant D	Female	9-12	22 years	Large public high school (over 1000 students)

Participants

The profiles listed in Table 4.1 provide a brief description of the backgrounds of the participants in this research study. The participants were a gendered mix of two male and two female teachers employed in both the separate and the public school systems. Their teaching experience ranged from 5 years to more than 22 years, and in all cases, at some point in the past, the participants had taught grade levels *other* than those of their current teaching load.

Culturally, the participants are similar: they are Caucasian, married, and educated in Western Canada. All had majored in physical education during their undergraduate years, and two of the participants were currently enrolled in graduate studies and furthering their education in the field of physical education. Furthermore, two of the participants had taught in locations outside of this province, and all had worked with colleagues who also taught physical education.

The participants were all eager to share their personal stories and elaborate on their experiences of teaching students physical education. All of them mentioned that they appreciated receiving the interview questions in advance of the interview, and in two cases the participants brought written notes of what they wanted to say on the day of the interview so that they would not forget key points. All of the interviews took place in locations that they chose, and a minimum of 80 minutes was required with each person.

The participants' quotations from the combined dataset are referenced with the page number from the dataset. This number is abbreviated as *TQ*, or *transcript quotation*. For example, a page number could be presented as *TQ, p. 6*. When a participant's discussion is summarized and not directly quoted, the passage is referred to as *TN*, or

transcript note. I have summarized passages when the participant spoke at great length on a particular point or when his or her meaning had to be clarified by using other words.

Relating To/With Students

The category of relating to/with students emerged from the data as the most important because each participant identified several related phrases, and in the final analysis this category included the largest number of themes: (a) caring for students, (b) student input, (c) honesty with students, (d) creating student enjoyment, (e) respecting students, and (f) options and variety for students. Each of these six subthemes is presented with the participants' quotations to provide a comprehensive understanding of their experience of teaching.

Each identified theme will be discussed, and with the use of the participants' quotations, a more comprehensive picture will be presented about why these individuals engage in their practice as they do and how they have adapted and responded to the ever-changing milieu in schools today. The themes are not presented in ranked order.

Caring For Students

The participants often used words such as "caring," "connecting with," and "helping" (all in relation to students) when they described *why* they do what they do on a daily basis and *why* they value teaching their students. Throughout each individual interview, this caring quality was evident and appeared to be sincere. For example, Participant B commented:

> I try to get a relationship with the students first. I find that if I have a good relationship with the students, they tend to do whatever I ask them to do. I try to build a rapport through the beginning of the year. (TQ, p. 4)

Similarly, Participant D stated, "Getting to know each kid individually so that you can understand their skill level and be able to get them to progress further is so important" (TQ, p. 3).

As teachers become more experienced, they seem increasingly concerned to help not only *some* students, but *all* students equally. All physical education teachers tend to have this initial desire to help all students to some degree, but the shift in focus from a teacher's personal needs to the students' exclusive needs seems to increase with experience in the profession.

Participant A described how he had changed:

> If anything has changed [in my career], it is that I am now trying to reach as many kids as I can—to get them to enjoy the opportunity, the experience, and to give them a chance to be successful at their own level. (TQ, p. 2)

Similarly, when Participant C was asked how he has changed in terms of his style of teaching, he stated:

> I think now I look at the bigger picture more. I am now much more concerned with my students' needs and not so much my needs. If I need to adjust my lesson I will, and my personal needs are no longer as important as my students' needs. It's no longer about me any more, but rather my students. (TQ, pp. 6-7)

As the researcher, I was gratified to hear about the teachers' genuine desire to help every single student. Through the participants' comments, I learned that they had often changed their lessons to accommodate even a single student. Furthermore, if more than one student was unsuccessful in learning, then the participants used a new approach. For example, Participant A commented on his desire to connect with all students:

> I am dealing with people and a whole lot of different people with a whole lot of different expectations. And so . . . I have to adjust and meet the needs of the people [students] almost in the way that some might look at it as though these students are customers/clients. They are not going to enjoy physical education if

> it's only about the program. It is about the people who are enjoying the opportunity to be active. (TQ, p.4)

I asked Participant C how he faces the challenges of teaching physical education to such a diverse group of learners on a daily and even hourly basis. His response was:

> I just try to come to school every day and say to myself that I am here for the kids, and I try to make sure that any decision I make is for the benefit of the kids. The school is not built to give us teachers a job; it's here to provide an education for the kids, and we are paid to provide that service to them. (TQ, p. 3)

When I looked deeply into the data and analyzed the participants' comments, I found a constant emphasis on wanting to help all students and doing whatever was needed to connect positively and supportively with the learners. For example, Participant D revealed she had learned through experience that each student requires something different: "I think you have to connect with every student, and especially those kids with a lower skill level and/or with lower social skills. You have to make them feel comfortable right away" (TQ, p. 9).

This kind of commitment to helping improve the learning climate by getting through to every learner was central in the inherent philosophies and reflective practices of all of the participants. Participant B summarized teachers' reward for their investment of time and energy in students: "It only needs to be one student who says that I made a difference in his or her life to make it all worthwhile" (TQ, p. 9).

All of the teachers spoke honestly and sincerely about truly desiring that all of their students acquire knowledge regardless of whether the program is teacher directed or student directed. Participant A explained that he knows that his responsibility is to connect with all students in his PE class, even those with low skills and those who are discipline problems. His comments revolved around his constant need to remind himself

that all types of learners are in every class and that the teacher must touch all students, not just the skilled and well-behaved ones (TN, p. 4). These teachers realized that every personal encounter with students provides an opportunity to teach and to help educate students. Although the students' new knowledge might not be easy to detect, these teachers always hoped that some form of learning, in some capacity, had occurred. For example, Participant B explained her self-evaluation of her success in the classroom as a measure of what her students take away from her classes: "My classes are about being healthy and active and for the students to come to realize that they can take some health benefits away from every class and which can be part of their lives outside of school" (TQ, p. 6).

Participant C also commented on this idea and explained his rationale for wanting to connect with all learners by focusing on the changing society in which we live and the resulting realities with which we must deal as public educators:

> I have to continually learn new ways to teach and get through to kids. With the types of students that are coming through our school now, there are many students with specific learning needs that I will need to learn more about in order to get through to them better. I need to continue to remind myself where a lot of my students come from and what their home life is like. (TQ, p. 5)

A final point related to this theme of the teachers' care and concern for their learners is that all of them mentioned the importance of getting to know their students outside the context of the traditional learning environment. For example, Participant D stated:

> I think a big thing for me is to realize how important it is to get to know the students outside of the PE classroom context. I think I have made and continue to make more time for getting to know my students. (TQ, p. 8)

Participant C believed that teachers must "really know [their] clientele" (TQ, p. 6), and Participant A agreed: "An effective PE teacher knows their clientele" (TQ, p. 3).

Student Input

The idea of permitting and encouraging students' voices was an evident theme in three of the four participants' interviews. They acknowledged that allowing students to voice their approval or disdain within the context of their learning is an important aspect of increasing students' motivation and the appeal of physical education. Participant B summarized the importance, from a teacher's perspective, of encouraging students' input:

> Through my teaching I have learned that they [students] really like to have input and a say into what they are doing and learning. They want to be part of the learning. They like to be leaders as well, and I give them these opportunities. (TQ, p. 7)

This comment is strikingly similar to one from Participant A, who acknowledged that he had changed in many ways over the course of his career. By allowing students an opportunity to provide feedback, he had been able to modify and improve his planning for future classes and students. He explained his attitude towards allowing student feedback in his classes:

> I think the kids who do provide input, whether it's positive or negative, at the very least appreciate the chance to provide their opinion. They are always willing to give opinions on other teachers. I don't want kids saying negative things about my classes, and I don't want them to say that I am always doing the same things. (TQ, p. 5)

Participant D has used the request for student feedback as a means to improve her own practice and to continue to learn as an educator. As well, she has long realized the importance and value of listening to and responding to a student's comments:

> Keeping a line of communication open is something that I have realized is very important, and the students appreciate it as well. I have learned that the students have a lot to offer, and I have learned a lot from them as well. They are not afraid to come to me with suggestions or to try something new for themselves in class as well. (TQ, p. 8)

Three participants agreed that by allowing students' voices to be heard in the context of physical education instruction, teachers can help students to see more value and possibly more relevance than they could have seen previously. Participant B was adamant about her role in involving students in their learning within her class and commented on the value that she has placed on their verbal contributions: "I have the students give me input into their learning. If they feel that they have ownership [in the class], then they will surely want to be involved" (TQ, p. 8).

Participant C did not explicitly state that he consciously seeks out student input and that he wants to know the students' feelings about his physical education class; however, when I asked him specifically about this issue, he explained why he does not ask for feedback from his students. For him, the school environment has changed in accordance with its surrounding society. The structure that he has in place when he teaches his physical education lessons is very routine, and the best way for him to maintain his discipline and organization is to maintain this routine (TN, p. 3). His rationale for establishing a routine and thus not consciously seeking student input was threefold. (a) The time for each class is minimal, and he sees his students only a couple of times a week; (b) the students are elementary school students and generally still learning basic movement patterns and appropriate knowledge related to physical education; therefore, he believed that his responsibility is to *teach* this content because the learners are not knowledgeable enough themselves; and (c) the need for structure and conformity has resulted in the establishment of a routine that helps him to teach content. Participant C explained: "In the gym the students get used to the consistency with which I run the

class. It becomes a routine over the six years that I have these students, which I hope will diminish the behavior challenges" (TQ, p. 3).

Although Participant C does not request student input as formally as the other three participants, he did say that he occasionally allows his students to choose activities to participate in and that he regularly gives them the chance to take leadership roles within his classes.

Honesty With Students

This theme emerged throughout the data, whether it was explicitly stated or left hidden and "under the surface" of some comments. Thus, honesty unquestionably has high value for the participants, although those participants with a longer tenure in the profession explicitly mentioned this quality the most frequently.

Participant A's and D's comments revealed that they believe that being open minded and truthful with students and fellow colleagues benefits everyone in the teaching-learning relationship. When asked about the characteristics of effective teaching and his own strengths, Participant A commented:

> I have to try and learn from all of my discussions that I have with colleagues and students, not just the people within the field of PE, but everyone. Making judgments and becoming more open to another perspective and seeing things another way is something I try to do. (TQ, p. 3)

Participant D put it this way: "Keeping a line of communication open with students is something that I have realized is very important, and the students appreciate it as well" (TQ, p. 8).

Participant C's role as primary physical education teacher within his school, along with being admired and popular amongst his students, have all contributed to his persona

of being an open and honest teacher. His colleagues felt that he commands the respect of his students by simply having the title of physical education teacher and being the only teacher who knows and teaches literally every single student in the school. He explained:

> I have been told I have a presence in our school. There's no one that can walk into the gym and just look around and get all of the students' attention. This may be in part due to the fact that I have been here for 12 years, but I think it is more in part of me running the PE program and knowing every student and being in open communication with him or her every day. The kids get to realize that I expect their best effort, and they will get my best effort as well. (TQ, p. 4)

The shift in focus from the teacher's needs to the students' needs was evident throughout our interview and Participant C's subsequent transcript. He acknowledged that being open and honest with all students is vital to his teaching success and his students' positive learning experience, and he succinctly described the roles of openness and honesty in his teaching practice: "If I need to adjust my lesson I will, and my personal needs are no longer as important as my students' needs. It's no longer about me any more, but rather my students" (TQ, pp. 6-7).

Creating Student Enjoyment

All four participants in this study understand well the value of having all learners enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to learn in various physical education environments. Each teacher emphasized the need to create relevant activities to increase students' enthusiasm for learning physical skills and appropriate psychomotor movements. For example, Participant D said that her experience had taught her not only that she is responsible for creating stimulating learning opportunities for her learners, but also that the students themselves have to take ownership of their learning. If students generate a personal desire to be involved in their learning, they will ultimately develop intrinsic

motivation to further their learning in physical and healthy pursuits. In her current teaching environment, Participant D is teaching in a senior high school where most of her students have voluntarily enrolled in her physical education classes. She commented on creating student enjoyment and the subsequent motivational issues that sometimes arise:

> Having the students take on this responsibility [personal motivation] has not been too bad at all. They like to be active and don't mind the responsibility. I think over the years this has changed, and I have changed in how I deal with this as well. I am at a point now in my life where I need to try and get the students to internalize the importance of activity and movement for their health. I think changing the activities often within a class is also important. It always used to be that students hated the fitness component of PE. For me, I am trying to turn this fitness [hang-up] into more of a game perspective where fitness is hidden and they don't realize that they are getting stronger and more fit. (TQ, p. 2)

Participant A added another dimension to the above comments in his remark that the teacher can share the joy of learning and teaching:

> I believe that my teaching reflects the fact that I want my students to enjoy it, but I want to enjoy it too. There have been those days when we (students and teacher) are barking at each other, and no one likes being in those situations. So I am really trying to work with the students to try and maximize an enjoyable environment at all times. (TQ, p. 6)

A teacher can create student enjoyment by employing various strategies and techniques. As Participant C learned while teaching his elementary classes, variety is truly vital. When I asked him about his particular views on his approach to teaching physical education, he replied, "One of my strengths is my willingness to try new ideas and activities" (TQ, p.7).

Although he employs a class structure with a definite routine to it, student enjoyment is always at the forefront of his planning. He plans a variety of activities that all have a definitive purpose. I asked him what typically happens in his classroom on any given day, and he responded:

> A quick warm-up then a skill activity and then an activity that goes with that skill prior to my closure. All of the activities would have a purpose, and hopefully there would be a lot of smiles on the faces of the children. If I can believe that activity is fun, then I think the students will be more likely to stay active. The students also like when I get involved in the lesson, like when we do a jogging activity and I jog with the slowest student and talk about the hare and the tortoise. (TQ, p. 7)

Respecting Students

Discussions with all four participants revealed that they value their role as educators and are genuinely concerned for the education and well-being of all of their students. Many of the participants' comments during the interviews touched on topics of a very personal nature such as being firm but fair, genuinely seeking student comments, and maintaining open lines of communication, which were just some of the practices relating to the theme of respecting students.

Participant A's experience taught him some valuable lessons when he works with students in physical education classes:

> On a personal level, students have taught me to be fair to them and treat them age appropriately. They are not small adults. You have to treat them at the level that they are at. Some kids are very mature and you can talk to them in a different way than some of the kids that are immature. You have to always keep their maturity level in mind. (TQ, p. 9)

When I asked Participant A about his relationship with more mature students and how his teaching had changed, if at all, his comments took on a much more serious and parental tone. The subtle and honest interplay between a teacher and his/her students is very powerful, especially when discipline is an issue or misunderstandings may occur. By using techniques such as verbal or nonverbal gestures during an actual lesson, a teacher can inform disruptive students that he or she is, in fact, aware of them without causing a disturbance and while maintaining their dignity (TN, p. 10).

Participant B has gradually become aware of an issue related to the subtheme of the need to be strict yet approachable. Her awareness that she is a relaxed teacher may have caused her some problems early in her career. With experience, she has learned that being more rigid in the classroom does not have to mean that she has to become less respectful towards her students. In fact, she believes that her maturity and increased firmness as a classroom teacher have resulted in an even stronger bond and, therefore, in increased respect between herself and her middle-years students (TN, p. 6).

Participant C's understanding of the need to respect his students has come from his number of years of experience in teaching students as well as being a father. Participant C spoke forcefully about respect, and I sensed his sincerity. Having taught and interacted with thousands of students over his career, he strongly believes that respect is extremely important in his daily life. During our interview, he twice commented about being firm but fair towards his students (TN, pp. 5, 9), and in my full-day observation of his teaching, I often saw him showing respect towards students regardless of their age or ability.

Options and Variety for Students

This final theme of providing options and variety for students has a definite impact on how the participants engage in their practice. The opportunity to relate positively to their students is directly related to *what* is taught and *why* certain activities are chosen. All of the participants in this study have long known the importance of providing students with options and planning a varied program. The beneficial outcomes are numerous. According to Participant D, not only is offering variety in an entire

program important, but so is changing its activities often, even within a particular class (TN, p. 2).

Participant D has over 20 years of teaching experience. Her philosophy is guided by her belief in the importance of providing a wealth of variety to her senior students in the hope that at least a portion of what she exposes them to will eventually motivate them to continue to be active after their formal schooling has ended. She stated:

> To this day I am still looking for new warm-up games. I want to do things that are fun and gets kids moving. I want to have as little down time as possible to have the kids most active. Anytime I can, I grab new games and I put them into our [school's] calendar of events. I am always looking to add variety to my program. (TQ, p. 4)

Although Participant D seeks out a variety of games, ideas, and activities to keep her program fresh and interesting for her students, her daily lessons reflect the underlying and more meaningful practice of using different teaching strategies. To ensure that she is offering quality learning and appropriate opportunities, she has built in a structure to ensure that all students are included in learning and are involved in activities appropriate for their ability levels. She described her approach as follows:

> What I like to do is offer a lot of options in my class. I give them options of doing tasks at different levels that will best serve their individual needs. I will offer the students different equipment as well. I do modify a lot of things, but I did not intentionally go into my lessons [as a young teacher] with that purpose originally in my mind. (TQ, p. 5)

This growth in Participant D's practice reflects her realization that students require variety and that when she modifies parts of her teaching, students benefit.

Participant B's methods of providing variety in her classes closely reflect the traditional way that we would expect variety to be implemented. She expressed her philosophy on variety:

> I try to teach the kids a whole realm of things, so we do both individual and team games and activities. This is done so that students can get a wide variety of experiences so that if they don't really like the traditional sports, they may still be active and participate in other activities. I am trying to provide opportunities for them and promote healthy active alternatives for the rest of their lives. (TQ, p. 1)

Like Participant D, Participant A has a philosophical approach to providing options and variety within his physical education classes:

> I think that whenever you think of an activity or part of a lesson, you must provide options, and so there may not be one single way to do something. You provide those options to the students, and with those options you are giving them the opportunity to make a decision that allows them to choose their level of success. Sharing with the students those options beforehand is a big deal, and that's where you start getting into those things like using rubrics or getting kids to select choices. (TQ, p. 10)

For Participant A, the natural way of teaching physical education has come to mean allowing his students ample opportunities to achieve success on their own. Consequently, his role is no longer simply that of a teacher, but that of a *facilitator* of learning, and he places the onus on his students to take responsibility for their knowledge acquisition.

Similarly, Participant D commented that as a teacher of physical education, she does not try to teach everything to everyone. The elementary years and middle-school years are a prime time for all learners to acquire a wealth of knowledge and skills, but in the senior grades the commitment and desire to learn more should be the responsibility of the individual student. She explained:

> In Grade 10 I still want the students to learn enough of the basics of the game or activity so that they may successfully participate. The second part is where I give them opportunities to come up with new ways of getting to a certain point or skill level. I do this in a variety of ways. For example, when I teach dance I will have the students use the moves that I have taught them, or they can create their own. If I am teaching an activity which is brand new, like Omnikin, then I will be doing

> most of the teaching to start. Once they have learned the game, then they can incorporate their own ideas and strategies. (TQ, p. 6)

Participant D's maturity and experience that she brings to the physical education classroom have had an impact. She said that the students in her program are excited about the variety that she offers the class and that she is more conscious now of the curricular outcomes for all of her students than she was as a younger and less experienced teacher (TN, p. 8).

Experiences Gained Through Teaching

All participants in this study reported that experience had a huge influence on their practice as teachers of physical education. Experience is the single most important factor that causes physical education teachers to rethink their philosophies regarding teaching and planning.

This section presents six themes related to the experiences gained through teaching: (a) external influences, (b) professional development, (c) content knowledge, (d) meaning of physical education, (e) evolution and maturity, and (f) varied teaching styles. The first theme discussed, external influences, creates the framework for all of the other themes with regard to how experience can, and has, affected the practice of the participants in this research study.

External Influences

For three of the participants the influence of a previous teacher during their public school years was strong enough to encourage them to think about a career in teaching. Although Participant D did not specifically mention any previous teacher's influence, she

did say that while she was still in high school, she believed that she would enjoy teaching as a career (TN, p.1).

Both Participants A and B commented on how their senior high school physical education teachers had influenced them and given them insight into the profession of teaching. I asked Participant A what influences, if any, had resulted in his becoming a physical education teacher:

> I had a couple of outstanding teachers that I remember from junior and senior high school. The thing that I enjoyed most about them was that they treated me as an individual, but they continued to challenge me. They were always challenging me and trying to make me realize that it was more than just skill that was important. (TQ, p. 1)

Additionally, Participant A explained, "The successes I have had teaching in the physical education environment have been a result of having very good role models at the secondary level" (TQ, p. 2).

Participant B seemed to light up and become excited when I asked her about the influences that had caused her to choose teaching as her profession. She believed that two factors had influenced her to become a PE teacher:

> When I was in high school, my Grade 12 PE teacher was very good. She was a gymnast, so we related in that way. I was not sure of what I was going to take in university, so she suggested that I should be a PE teacher. I did not realize that I could do this as a job. I considered this for a while and thought about maybe just taking some courses in the Faculty of Phys. Ed. and not the Faculty of Education since everyone in my family was already a teacher. I suggested the idea to my parents, who were funding my education, but did not get full support from my mom. She said that there were no jobs, but we made a compromise and I decided to be a PE teacher by going through the Faculty of Education. In a roundabout way I kind of got forced into the profession a bit, but it's been all good. (TQ, p. 2)

Participant B referred to a very supportive cooperating teacher that she had had during her internship. This mentor teacher showed her how to incorporate many great ideas and was not "old-school sports style" (TQ, p. 1).

When I asked Participant C about past influences of teachers, he mentioned many of these same ideas. For him, successful and encouraging professionals were a huge part of his development, and today he continues to emphasize the importance of nurturing and maintaining professional relations. I asked him about some of the factors that had influenced him to become a teacher, and he responded, "Some of the teachers that I had in school, including my homeroom teacher, encouraged me to take some PE classes when I went to university" (TQ, p. 1). Like Participant B, Participant C stated that a successful and supportive mentor teacher during internship was also very important:

> During my internship I had a great supervising teacher. I had a lot of opportunity to teach Grade 7/8 PE. I also had a chance to work with the senior high PE teacher and had the chance to teach some activities to older grades as well. (TQ, p. 1)

I sensed that all of the participants had a strong connection with the past, and I felt that in many ways the guidance and support that they had all received during their formative years as high school students and preservice teachers had influenced who they were as educators.

Professional Development

The theme of professional development emerged from all of the interviews with the participants, who highly valued their involvement with the provincial Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) of Alberta and perceived it as providing the most valuable and easily accessible opportunity to stay abreast of new ideas and information.

All of the participants were current members of the council, and three had current or previous experience as executive members.

Participant C often commented about professional development throughout his 90-minute interview. He could not overstate his passion for and belief in improving himself through professional development opportunities:

> My association with the HPEC of Alberta has led me to be involved with CAHPERD [Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance] and, locally, with my own public school division, which has then put me into various leadership roles locally. I think these professional organizations and the people I have met there have allowed me to think about PE in a wider context and the overall development of the child. Generally speaking, the context of PE for me starts locally, then provincially, nationally, and internationally. I have realized that there are many people working and trying to achieve the same things that I am. So if we work together in a common approach, we can end up doing things that we should be doing, and that's putting kids first and providing them with numerous opportunities. (TQ, p. 2)

Participant C went on to say, "A belief in professional development is very important. To be involved in your professional associations and organizations is critical. They not only reenergize me, but also create a lot of opportunities to learn new information" (TQ, p. 4).

Participant A was also strongly in favor of continually being involved in professional development, and his experiences were evidence of this kind of involvement:

> Well, I am probably involved in as many different levels [of professional development] as I could be. I am involved in graduate studies by pursuing my master's degree; I am involved in the provincial HPEC Council as an executive member, along with being on other important advocacy committees provincially. I am a physical education consultant for the school board that I am employed with, and I am the current editor for a very important provincial journal that is associated with our field of physical education. (TQ, p. 11)

Although he values and participates in professional development activities, Participant A stressed that his maturity in terms of professional development has evolved significantly as well:

> I think the format of becoming more professional is different for me than it was earlier in my career. I used to think that if I went to a conference or inservice and I was gathering more information and knowledge, it was like adding more Cub Scout badges. (TQ, p. 11)

For Participants B and D, professional development had similar yet differing priorities. Both stressed the value of attending conferences to acquire knowledge, to develop and maintain collegial rapport, and to disseminate personal knowledge to others by being a presenter at various sessions. However, Participant B seemed to perceive continuous professional growth as a matter of simply attending and being involved in conferences, whereas for Participant D, professional development involved much more than simply one or two yearly activities:

> Taking grad courses has made me look at research in a new light and also verify to me that what I might be doing [as a teacher] is grounded in research. I guess taking more university courses is something that I would like to increase my involvement in. I consider it a great source of PD for myself in addition to just attending conferences. (TQ, pp. 4-5)

With her involvement in the provincial HPEC Council and current status as a graduate student, Participant D has come to understand what it takes for her to grow professionally and what the value of professional development is to her. The knowledge that she has acquired through her experience has also resulted in opportunities for her to disseminate her knowledge to other professionals in the field by running workshops for her school division and presenting sessions at numerous conferences and conventions (TN, p. 10). When I asked her how professional development has been part of her life,

Participant D replied, "I think it's a very necessary component on how one can improve as a teacher; otherwise you will always stay the same and probably never change or change very slowly" (TQ, p. 10).

Realizing that professional development entails much more than just conference attendance and observing other like-minded professionals engaged in their practice, Participant C acknowledged that, for him, professional development is a much broader issue. Improving his practice in terms of becoming a better teacher of physical education includes subscribing to periodicals from the field of physical education and staying abreast of current research. As well, becoming more competent in technological literacy and using the Internet have provided him with access to information that was at one time much more elusive and difficult to access. Finally, the aspect of reflection in practice has become more meaningful and relevant for him, and his conscious daily examination of his own teaching practice is a huge part of his professional awareness and development (TN, p. 9).

Content Knowledge

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was the need to thoroughly understand the content within a subject area. All of the teachers in this study conveyed an understanding that successful teachers of physical education must possess a broad, comprehensive, and thorough content knowledge base. Participant D stated, "A broad knowledge background is necessary" (TQ, p. 3). As well, a teacher's experience can often help him or her out in specific situations, and possessing a wealth of knowledge can alleviate potential problems before they happen. Participant D explained:

> I am way more relaxed now because I am confident in what I am doing. I have a huge bank of knowledge in my mind so that if something doesn't work, I don't have to panic and look back at my lesson plan and worry about what I am going to do next. (TQ, p. 6)

Similarly, Participant B viewed content knowledge as important, as she stated very succinctly, "You need to know your subject" (TQ, p. 3). Although she admitted to still not knowing all that she needs to know as a physical education teacher, Participant B is very aware of the broad knowledge base that she needs to continue to acquire.

Likewise, Participant C commented, "The knowledge base has to be there, both from an objective and a subjective point of view. You just can't have 300 games and run a different game every day" (TQ, p. 4). Participant C is also well aware of the value of knowing the subject area in its broadest sense. He commented that he had seen far too many examples of teachers simply organizing games and allowing free playtime for students. He believed that some teachers do not plan lessons very well and subsequently teach inappropriate lessons. The poorly planned lessons are generally a reflection of a lack of knowledge on the teacher's part and an inability to instruct appropriate movement skills to students.

Meaning of Physical Education

All of the participants in this study discussed physical education as much more than a simple matter of skill acquisition and learning through the psychomotor domain. Each professional emphasized the breadth of meaning and the importance of educating their students about more than just sport skills. For the most part, the participants noted that this realization had resulted from their varied teaching experience and awareness of their own professional growth from the time that they were novice teachers to their

current status as experienced educators. For example, Participant A spoke about the meaning of physical education:

> I have always felt that the physical aspect of learning about anything, the physical education that you can grasp, the dynamic of mind and body, is the one thing that would put everybody at balance. To really make people understand that any activities that you do in a PE program should always be tied to the idea that you are learning something physical, whether it's a skill or attitude component, but that has to be part of the overall learning, the overall education. (TQ, p. 2)

Later, Participant A observed:

> I think the PE community has come to realize that there is now a shift in attitude and that PE is not just about the elite sports, and it's not even about teaching sports! It's about being active and active living and trying to get everybody on board about enjoying physical activity, but also not just about physical activity, because as educators we are planning and teaching lessons, making decisions and judgments, stressing cooperation, and dealing with others. I think that's where the education in PE is! (TQ, p. 12)

In a very interesting analogy, Participant A later compared physical education to the business world:

> PE is a little bit like maybe a company that has gotten complacent and has been doing the same thing for a very long time. I think PE is going to become a place where many more people are enjoying themselves because we have catered to this new need to focus less on skill performance. That's not to downplay skill performance all together, but it's not only about skill performance and development, it's about some of the affective issues and cooperation and relationship issues, and most of all to give all of those people success time! (TQ, pp. 12-13)

Like Participant A, Participant B also felt that physical education has a much broader meaning than it might have had in the past. As a younger teacher with five years' experience, she stressed that she did not want to portray physical education as being simply a one-dimensional subject involving only sports. She noted that the new provincial curriculum had significantly changed her philosophy of physical education:

> I think my philosophy is not "old school" and teaching just traditional sports. I don't really do that, but rather I focus on active living and enjoyment of activity for students. I try to teach the kids a whole realm of things, so we do individual activities and games. This is done so that students can get a wide variety of experiences so that if they don't really like the traditional sports, they may still be active and participate in other activities. I am trying to provide opportunities for them and promote healthy active alternatives for the rest of their lives. (TQ, p. 1)

Participant B summed up her broad view of the meaning of physical education: "I want them [my students] to understand that PE is a whole lifestyle and not just a class" (TQ, p. 2). As well, she stated, "I don't spend as much time on specific skills as I used to do, but I do a lot more of it now in the context of games, so that the students are always active" (TQ, p. 5).

Participant C reported that his personal growth and maturity had resulted in his new perception of physical education. He summarized his new understanding of its meaning:

> As a beginning teacher I was more sport-oriented in my philosophy. Not all kids are going to be high-level athletes, but that doesn't mean that they are not important. They still need to be involved in activity regardless of their age. I try to pass on this idea to my student here. (TQ, p. 2)

As well, Participant C commented:

> I want my students to understand that activity is something that is a necessary part of their life. It is something that they should do every day just like brushing their teeth. With elementary students they can understand this logic. (TQ, p. 2)

For all participants, *physical education* has acquired a broader definition. Traditionally, the term was considered in a very narrow context that focused solely on skill acquisition and learning about sports; but today, as Participant D explained, "There is a broader perspective to my teaching now. Looking at things from a transferable perspective and not so much as a skill unto itself" (TQ, p. 8). I asked about her

philosophy and what PE means to her at this point in her career, and she replied that "there is more of a purpose now in the way PE is taught besides just fitness" (TQ, p. 11) and that simply teaching students how to play a game is not enough (TN, p. 12).

All four participants have developed a similar value system reflecting their personal meaning/definition of physical education. The similarities lie in the fact that they all highly value improvements in student health and conscientiously plan for that in their classes. As well, they routinely stress the characteristics of leadership and cooperation within their classes to ensure that equity and fair play are understood, learned, and practiced. To some degree all of the participants also encourage social responsibility among their students and expect that the students will develop at least a minimal amount of self-awareness and personal responsibility for their own learning in the physical education context.

Evolution and Maturity

As I continue to analyze and interpret my findings, I often refer to my original research question: *Why do current physical education teachers engage in their practice as they do?* I now realize that the participants in my study all believed that their personal growth and maturity were possibly the main factors in changing their attitude towards teaching students the subject of physical education. The metamorphosis of a teacher from novice educator to a veteran allows the teacher to reflect upon his or her teaching and personal interactions and to contemplate past decisions. As my discussions with the participants unfolded, they revealed that the experience they had gained through teaching had been invaluable and had led to specific changes in how and why they engaged in their current practices.

The most experienced teacher, Participant D, discussed the maturing process for herself in terms of "developing from being a follower to being more of a leader"(TQ, p. 1). As well, she provided other examples of her personal growth as an educator: "Being able to modify and be more creative are characteristics that have emerged with my experience. You just know how things will run with more experience to fall back on" (TQ, p. 4). She went on to say, "My confidence has also developed as I have gained more experience in teaching" (TQ, p. 4).

Participant B, the least experienced teacher in the study, also highly valued her experiences, and when I asked her if she had changed at all in her teaching career thus far, she responded:

> I think through experience I have gotten stronger. I remember when I was a first-year teacher, I was nowhere near as strong as I am now. Although I think I possessed the skills [to be a strong teacher], they were not very refined. I know I was not as strong in my teaching when I started, but I am a lot stricter now than my first year. I may also be a lot more tolerable of some types of behavior. I have become much stronger in my teaching, and I know it's because of experience and different children and different co-workers. (TQ, p. 4)

The experience of interacting with numerous students each day benefits all teachers. Seeing similar, yet unique situations unfold in a physical education learning environment increases a teacher's confidence and ability to make appropriate decisions. Participant B explained the value of these experiences:

> I think my structures may be a bit more rigid now, but the kids wouldn't know that; it's just me that knows that. I think what I expect in the sense of classroom management is a little stricter now, but the actual class itself is a little more refined. (TQ, p. 6)

In his comments, Participant A was open and honest about his growth and maturity. During our interview he often explained at great length his evolution and

maturity as an educator, while always stressing that he continued to try to improve for the benefit of his learners. For example, he explained:

> I have definitely evolved. I think that looking back I probably focused much more time on the program. I set up my lesson plans and I organized my teaching and classroom management in a way that I was going to 'deliver the goods.' You either got on board my train, or you missed it. With experience you realize that although the program is important and you have to try and stay focused on the end of line, you are dealing with people and a whole lot of different expectations. (TQ, p. 4)

As well as recognizing that a teacher's focus broadens substantially with experience, Participant A also discussed how his ability to make improved judgments had positively affected his practice (TN, p. 6). One specific example he gave pertains to his ability to deal with students' off-task behavior:

> I think one of the things you get really good at is multitasking. You are able to think about things on the spot, and so just because there is a disruptive student doesn't mean the whole class should be frozen in time. Sometimes instead of isolating a student, one of the best things you can do is to just keep it in mind and let a couple of things go by before you stop everything. One's experience will come into play along with the age group of the learners you are dealing with and how long you have taught the students. (TQ, p.10)

Participant C was also able to look deeply into his own shortcomings to admit his errors in the past because of lack of experience. He believed that he had matured enough to be well aware of his role in teaching physical education and that he was only one small part of the bigger picture of helping to educate students and improve their overall development (TN, p. 2). As well, his maturity has allowed him to acknowledge that his colleagues also want what is best for their students, even during times of disagreement (TN, p. 3). Participant C's approach to assessment in the elementary grades demonstrates his maturity in his teaching. When I asked him if he had learned anything from his students, he replied:

> I have learned from my students that for me 'taking the mark' in my class is not as important as teaching them is. Sitting with a clipboard and validating my mark is not real important to them. They want me to teach them PE. (TQ, p. 8)

As I indicated earlier in this section, maturity and experience are possibly the most important factors in permanent and meaningful change in a physical education teacher's practice. This one theme often emerged from my conversations and interviews with the participants.

Varied Teaching Styles

The final theme that evolved out of the category of *experiences gained through teaching* is the need for teachers to be flexible and varied in their approach to teaching students. The use of a wide array of teaching styles has been identified as a key factor for ensuring that all learners' needs are addressed in the teaching-and-learning relationship. All four participants in the study mentioned that being open minded and resourceful while presenting content knowledge to students is of paramount importance. Participant D outlined her approach:

> Flexibility in the planning and implementing of each lesson is critical. You have to be able to see everything in class and be able to switch the plan on the go if a lesson is not going how you expected it to. Always have a plan and be willing to change if need be. (TQ, p. 3)

She explained her preferred teaching styles and has tried different techniques; however, she said, "I still find that giving lots of demonstrations and verbal cues still works the best for me" (TQ, p. 6).

With more experience, Participant A realized that utilizing varied teaching styles is not a way simply to make learning more enjoyable for students, but also to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn the content that is being presented. As part of

his maturing process, Participant A has evolved and become creative out of necessity. He elaborated:

> I think what I have now is a wide variety of styles that I can use based on who my audience is and based on the material that I have. I think I am a pretty good judge of what is working, and if I need to change or adapt something, I have that ability to. (TQ, p. 5)

Participant A remarked that, for him, physical education has a broad meaning and is more than just acquiring adequate sports skills (TN, p. 12). Appealing to all three learning domains (cognitive, psychomotor, and affective) is also of great importance, and Participant A explained his instructional approach in a typical PE class:

> I would have multiple tasks going on, so there is some sort of a mental aspect going on as well as a physical aspect. The kids would be involved in some sort of decision-making or problem-solving aspect in their work. I would like to think that in every class that I teach, there is an element where the kids are recognizing some sort of a cooperative and team element. This would include all students and myself because this is something where we are all involved in the learning together and where we try to help one another to succeed. (TQ, p. 6)

Similarly, Participant B also believed that teachers should involve themselves in an activity with students while they are learning. She equated her involvement with the students to garnering more respect and credibility for whatever she asks them to do. Specifically, she felt that her involvement in the class when fitness components are being taught gives the students some much needed motivation and allows her to be viewed as someone who "practices what she preaches."

Participant B discussed variety in her program and her approach to planning:

> I like to give the kids more opportunities to try things, and not necessarily just in the traditional classroom, but to do things in the outdoors such as skating and swimming. I would like to really expand and be able to do other activities instead of just being in the gym and out on the field. (TQ, p. 4)

I asked Participant B which specific teaching strategies she employs when instructing her students, and she responded:

> I used to do a lot of lecturing and then have the students practice what I had just explained, but now my instructions are very quick. I will give a quick instruction and then the activity. I'll have them stop, and then I speak again. The students don't come into where I am any more when I give instructions because this saves time. I also don't spend as much time on specific skills as I used to do. I still teach the students skills, but I do it in the context of games now. (TQ, pp. 4-5)

In response to my question about other examples of how she incorporates various teaching styles or her approach to teaching in general, Participant B said:

> I try to make it so that the students are always challenged to learn in different ways; otherwise they get bored. Sometimes I will ask them questions just to catch them and bring them back to the learning that is going on. (TQ, p. 8)

Participant C acknowledged that he uses mainly a teacher-directed instructional style (TN, p. 6). He explained that because his learners are at a very young age, he could accomplish more in the minimum amount of time that he has without running the risk of using alternative strategies that may or may not result in student learning. He described his teaching approach as follows:

> My primary teaching style can be considered teacher directed. I demonstrate, and then the students try the skills. We do some station work and have even tried some peer teaching. A lot of what I can do will depend on the makeup of the classes. I have such a huge number of students, so I try to prioritize activity and movement in the 30 minutes that I have. Things have to be very structured. (TQ, p. 6)

Undoubtedly, the need for variety and flexibility is an important factor when the participants consider the learning needs of all students. The teacher participants use varied approaches based on their specific school environments and, in some cases, specific classes. They provided strong evidence that demonstrated that their maturity and

growth through their teaching experiences have resulted in improved classroom management and enhanced student appreciation of physical education.

Self-Awareness

The category of self-awareness represented five themes that emerged in my interviews with the participants: (a) early success, (b) reflection, (c) self-improvement, (d) confidence, and (e) organization and planning. The participants are aware of who they are as professionals and recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and they explained to me their belief in reflection: that, from a young age, physical education had always been a generally enjoyable and positive experience for them, and that, as professionals, they utilize and value reflection in their daily practice. The following section is a discussion of how self-awareness has influenced these teachers to become who they are and how their lives as physical educators have changed.

Early Success

It is interesting that three of the four participants commented on the successes and joys that they had experienced in physical education early in their lives. Only Participant B, the youngest and least experienced teacher of the group, believed that her early PE experiences were neither positive nor enjoyable. Ironically, she is perhaps the most physically active now of all of the interviewees, and her passion for involvement in physical activity cannot be overemphasized.

Participant A's early memories of physical education were dominated by memories of playing sports and the joy of competition. He explained that as a young student he looked forward to the opportunity to go to the gym and have fun:

> It was a time where I felt at ease because I was accomplished physically. I could do all that I was asked to do and was one of the best students with the skills. I saw a lot of success in that class [physical education]. It was always very motivating for me to go to the gym because I liked to do the things that I was good at. (TQ, p. 1)

Like Participant A, Participant C described his early and repeated success in his physical education classes:

> I really like the subject of physical education, and I've always liked activity. I was lucky enough to grow up in a small community where I was able to play every sport because there were so few students. I've always had fond memories of sports activities and PE. (TQ, p. 1)

Both teachers had equally positive and successful experiences as students in their respective physical education environments. Both also mentioned that they had had extremely supportive and encouraging teachers who had instilled within them a love for purposeful movement and a delight in physical education.

Participant D explained that her memories of past PE classes were rooted in smiles, enthusiasm, and her wish that her PE classes would not end (TN, p. 1). She described her memories as a student in physical education class: "I loved PE. I looked forward to PE classes every day, so therefore I took all available option classes in PE that I was able to" (TQ, p. 1).

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, only Participant B had not been successful in PE as a student. She explained her situation to me:

> I wasn't a phys. ed. person at all. I participated in a lot of individual sports as a kid, but it was outside of school. In school we just did sports, and I wasn't very coordinated and didn't like a lot of team sports. I found PE somewhat frustrating and tried to get out of it a lot. I didn't like it very much, so my actual school experience in PE wasn't very positive. (TQ, p. 1)

Despite her negative memories of PE, her experiences caused her to become more interested in the subject of physical education and created a desire within her to be a teacher who would be very different from most of the PE teachers she had had as a young student.

Reflection

The extent to which reflection plays a role in the lives of each participant in this study varied greatly. Although two participants conscientiously maintain a daily journal, whereas the other two reflect during unscheduled "me time," all agreed that reflecting on their own practice is important to their growth and that they value it more with each passing year. Both Participants B and D have a formalized routine for reflecting on their practices. Participant B explained:

> I reflect a lot, and I use a daily journal. I tend to write things down that both go well and not so well, along with incidents that I could have handled better. I also reflect in terms of discussions with other teachers and share ideas with them. (TQ, p. 9)

Participant D's approach to reflective practice is seemingly not as self-motivated because her school division requires that she formally participate in self-reflection. She stated, "I have to keep a professional portfolio where I have to set personal and professional goals every year" (TQ, p. 10). However, although she stressed that she *must* keep a professional journal, she also went on to say:

> I consciously think and reflect, even though sometimes I am not always writing these thoughts down. I think it's a very necessary component of how one can improve as a teacher. Every day after my classes I think to myself about how things went and what I did and what I can do better. It's [reflection] always in my head, and part of who I am is being hard on myself. (TQ, p. 10)

The realization that improvement is always possible and that the primary goal for all teachers is to educate students and do whatever they can to accomplish this goal was evident in my discussions with both Participants A and C. The notion of reflecting was well-ingrained in Participant A during his time as an undergraduate student. He described his early approach to reflection:

> As an undergrad, it was about learning new skills to be demonstrated to others. I tried to learn in all of my activity courses, to put myself in the position of being someone who could not do the activity. One of the little tricks I learned as an undergrad was that I needed to be learning as a teacher to put myself in the position of the learner. (TQ, p. 1)

After 15 years as a teacher of physical education, Participant C also understood his place in the field of education and valued the needs of his students above all else. When I asked him about reflection in a general sense, he was quick to respond:

> I put student needs first, and I am not so concerned any more with my agenda or my personal needs in the teaching/learning environment. I think I understand the bigger picture better regarding PE. It's more than just what I am doing in the community where I live, but what is happening at both the provincial and national levels as well. I ask myself now, What can I do to help the subject? Is it just about modeling a program, or more? (TQ, p. 7)

Because students are always these teachers' central focus, it is not surprising that the students' needs are at the forefront of the teachers' reflective thoughts. In her self-analysis regarding teaching and reflecting, Participant B remarked:

> The whole idea of keeping kids active all the time and not worrying about if they are the best at everything is something I have come to realize and have changed my teaching from where you have to be perfect at all skills to other more meaningful objectives such as cooperation and teamwork. (TQ, p. 5)

Similarly, Participant A commented:

> I think that, looking back on my teaching I probably focused much more time on the program. I set up my lessons and organized my teaching environment in such a way that I was going to deliver my goods, my way. (TQ, p. 4)

He also said, "I realized in time that the students would not enjoy my class and not enjoy PE if it was only about the program." (TQ, p. 4)

Participant A believed that his open-mindedness has allowed him to view himself critically and, for the most part, improve any of his shortcomings as a teacher. His personal honesty and truthful approach, in conjunction with being a reflective practitioner, have allowed him to improve his teaching and make stronger connections with all of his learners. He acknowledged the use of reflection in his daily practice:

> I am able to realize that I have to adjust my teaching to meet individual needs. I don't try to be a "one-trick-pony", and I don't try to give the spiel just one way. My brain is always looking to change, and I am paraphrasing and constantly changing the activities to meet the needs of those that I am dealing with. (TQ, p. 3)

Participant C also reflects regularly, although he was willing to admit that other people deserve credit for helping him to think as he does: "The people I have met as a result of my involvement in various organizations and committees have allowed me to think about PE in a wider context and the overall development of the child" (TQ, p. 2). Additionally, Participant C uses reflection often as a formal and informal assessment of his own practice and still strives to improve by thinking daily about what he does as a teacher. He clearly made his point when he stated, "When I come to the day that I think I have learned all there is to know about teaching, then its time for me to move on" (TQ, p. 5).

Self-Improvement

As a theme, self-improvement figured prominently in the lives of all of the interviewees. Their acknowledgement of their need to constantly improve was a true sign of their self-awareness and recognition that they still had much to learn.

For three participants the desire to be the best that they can be is a characteristic of their personalities. Participant D explained that she is very hard on herself and always wants things to be very good in her teaching (TN, p. 4). As well, her constant desire to improve and to accumulate new knowledge has resulted in her leaving the country and living in Australia on sabbatical, in search of more ideas to improve her practice. She explained, "I am the type of person who can't stay in one place for a long time. I feel there is so much more out there to learn" (TQ, p. 1).

Participant C also expressed a constant desire to learn more to be able to teach better:

> I always feel that I can learn more. Specifically, there are always new techniques to learn and new ways to get the information out to students. I have to continually learn new ways to teach and get through to kids. Also, with numerous students possessing specific learning needs, I need to learn more about many of those issues in order to get through to them better. (TQ, p. 5)

Like Participant C, Participant B commented on her desire and need to improve and explained what she has done to learn more: "I have increased my knowledge in different sports, and I have been able to learn more about safety in the classroom and adapt my teaching to ensure student safety is maintained" (TQ, p. 5). She further explained that she believes that her attendance at various conferences is essential to stay abreast of new knowledge and engage in conversations with other professionals in the field to share ideas and insights (TN, p. 9).

Participant A also tries to improve himself by engaging in discussions about the field of physical education with other professionals. He remarked, "One of the things I try to do is to learn from discussions that I have with other colleagues—not only colleagues within the field of PE but also colleagues from other subject areas too" (TQ, p. 3). He also commented:

> An effective teacher is a very honest person and is aware of their limitations and tries to regularly improve on himself or herself and learn, because they are not just the experts on everything. There is always room for improvement. (TQ, p. 3)

Having proved himself to be a very open, reflective, and generally self-critical educator, Participant A summed up his thoughts on self-improvement and the need to stay current:

> I regularly look at what I am doing and challenge myself. I will always want to enjoy my job, and I always want to continue to think that, hey, I am not at the end of the road; the road always keeps going; there is always another step to take. (TQ, p. 9)

Confidence

Possessing confidence in one's teaching ability is another common theme that emerged in my interviews with the participants and that showed a further aspect of their self-awareness. Both Participant A's tone and comments revealed his self-confidence. Perhaps because of his experience and countless dealings with students, he seemed to be able to sense how he wanted each lesson to unfold and conclude:

> I see and have a vision for the end of the lesson, the end of the road. I can see where I want my student or athlete to be. I have good judgment of potential. I am able to prepare a plan and share that plan with them—sharing with them objectives and saying, "This is where I think you can get to and I really believe you can do this and I am here to help you get there." I think I am also a pretty good motivator. I get kids engaged, moving, and excited. (TQ, p. 4)

Participant B also is able to create joy and excitement in her learners. Her confidence stems from her belief that she must develop rapport with her students, after which "they tend to do whatever [she asks] them to do" (TQ, p. 4). Her strong confidence can also be attributed to how she perceives her students typically reacting to her:

> The kids respond very well to me being me. I think a lot of kids look up to me for being so active. I think that if you are a PE teacher and you are not active yourself, it's really hard for them to believe in you. If you show them that you live a healthy lifestyle and it's important to you, then they will respond a lot better to your teaching. (TQ, p. 7)

Participant B also revealed her confidence in her comment, "I live what I teach, and the students can see this. I am a model for them both in and out of class" (TQ, p. 8).

Although not claiming to be a model citizen both in and out of class, Participant C believed that he is looked up to and respected in his school. He discussed how he thought others perceive him as a teacher: "I have been told that I have a *presence* in our school. There is no one in the school that can walk into the gym and just look around and get all of the students' attention like I can" (TQ, p. 4). With respect to how his students probably view him, Participant C stated:

> I think the kids here would probably consider me the most popular teacher because of the subject that I teach. They really like PE, and they see me a lot and I am easy to talk to. They like me in many ways and know I have boundaries, so they don't want to get into trouble with me. (TQ, pp. 7-8)

When he discussed his perception of how parents and his colleagues view him, Participant C shared more comments regarding confidence and feelings of self-worth:

> I think with the parents, they know that I am the PE specialist here and that I see all of their kids, so they will rarely question me about their child's PE mark. As for my colleagues, I think they are happy with me, and they know I am very good at what I do. (TQ, p. 8)

As the most experienced of my four interviewees, Participant D seemed more reserved concerning her confidence in herself as a teacher. She felt that her students respect her, likely because she always respects them (TN, p. 7). When I asked her how she had changed, if at all, as a teacher of PE, Participant D stated that she has gained a considerable amount of confidence over the years and that she is now able to go into her classes knowing the exact outcomes that she wants to accomplish (TN, p. 8). A final comment by Participant D emphasized that she is confident in her ability to connect with learners and is proud of the job that she is doing:

> I have the ability and desire to reach kids at all different levels. Whether it is skill related, their specific learning needs, or their lack of social skills, I am able to modify what I have in my head to best suit the personal needs of each student. (TQ, p. 9)

Organization and Planning

The final theme in the category of self-awareness involves being organized and well-planned; all of the participants felt that they possess these qualities. Although they did not mention it often, it almost appeared to be an asset of effective teaching practice and was not a critical issue after a few years of teaching experience in the field.

In some cases, the terms *organized* and *well planned* did not seem to fit as well as the term *routine*. The two participants who worked in the elementary and middle-school environments based their approaches to maintaining discipline and keeping the learning environment organized on establishing a routine that would be learned and subsequently followed daily by all classes. Participant C commented, "My classes have a routine to them: a quick warm-up, then a skill activity, and then an activity that goes with that skill before going to our closure" (TQ, p. 7). Similarly, Participant B said, "Right now the kids

come in and sit down, but it allows them to calm down prior to the activity" (TQ, p. 4). She later explained, "I always start off with a warm-up and stretches. The students do this every day and are already in this routine" (TQ, p. 6). Both of these individuals mentioned the need to settle down the learners at the start of each lesson, and I observed that these teachers began their elementary classes by doing so.

Participant D believed that her success as an educator has resulted mainly from her skills as an avid planner and organizer. She admitted, "I am highly organized, and I have trouble flying by the seat of my pants. Sometimes I am a little anal and over-organized about some things" (TQ, p. 3). She added, "I have always been organized. Being able to modify and be more creative are characteristics that have emerged with experience" (TQ, p. 4).

Participant A acknowledged that being planned and organized was vital to his job, but he did not believe that he had a problem with or needed to be concerned about this issue. As a novice teacher he had dealt with it, and then through experience he realized that higher-order issues such as self-actualization, reflection, and responding to student needs demanded more of his attention (TN, p. 9).

Passion for the Field of Physical Education

This final category contains two important related themes involving teachers' passion for and beliefs about the subject of physical education. I present this final category with the hope of trying to convey the genuine love and joy that all four of these teachers have for the field of physical education and for their students.

Belief and Joy in Teaching

When describing their feelings about how they view teaching and how much they value it, the four participants used words such as *joy*, *love*, and *passion*. Even if these teachers had not shown their passion for teaching, their comments in general would have revealed that they love what they are doing and have done so throughout their years of teaching.

The most experienced teacher, Participant D, spoke about what PE has meant to her: "I think it's a passion of mine. I think any teacher who is passionate does better because passion is passed on to the students regardless of the subject" (TQ, p. 9). She concluded her interview by stating, "I still love my job and can see myself continuing to teach PE until I retire. I believe that instilling a lifelong desire to be active is one of the most important attitudes or values I can provide for my students" (TQ, p. 12).

Having taught in a predominantly elementary-aged environment for his entire career, Participant C spoke often about his belief in his job and in what he does daily as a teacher with young learners:

> I think that my belief in the value of PE has served me well. Both my colleagues and my students know how much I value PE as a discipline and the field of study. It's not just game time, but we are here to learn things and experience things. We want to have fun, but learning is first. You have to walk the talk. (TQ, p. 4)

This approach has obviously served Participant C well in his career, as I learned from observing the students under his tutelage. Their general enthusiasm was high, and the two-way respect between student and teacher was evident. He smiled and maintained a positive demeanor for the entire school day, even though seven classes and some 150 students passed through his gymnasium over a six-hour time period. Participant C explained what he values most about his job:

> To have the kids come into a subject that I truly care about and see the excitement on their faces; to realize that I am hopefully keeping them turned on to this discipline and, by coming into my class, I am broadening their horizons so that they may choose a particular activity to be involved with in the future. I hope that I can give my students the sense that PE is important, that I am important as a person, and that this activity is good for me. (TQ, p. 10)

Both Participants A and B have a clear vision for their students, and their belief in their job has helped them to stay focused on their goals while always maintaining their love for the profession. The following comments clearly express Participant B's joy and goals as a teacher:

> I love it [PE]! I love teaching PE and being active and promoting a healthy lifestyle. If they [the students] have an environment where they see activity every day, then I think it will become second nature for them, and hopefully it [the activity] will become part of their life. I have a five-year plan now for this school, so this is my hope. (TQ, p. 3)

Participant A spoke at length about his belief in PE and explained that physical education teachers not only have to believe in what they are doing, but also have to be advocates for their discipline. Participant A has seen himself as an advocate during his entire career, and he has tried to convince everyone about the importance of PE. He explained:

> I have become very active within the school system, putting up signs and promoting PE activities and promoting athletics and getting kids involved in intramurals and trying to get them information about what is going on in their community. I have really tried to be a champion in terms of PE being a wonderful part of learning when you are a young person. (TQ, p. 3)

He also emphasized his belief in the discipline and in his role as an educator in this very important subject: "I wish there were an easy way for physical education to be more recognized as a tough but equal component of all the educational subjects. Too often it has been viewed as just PE or playing in the gym" (TQ, p. 8).

As a final commentary on his feelings towards his job, the subject of physical education, and his success as a physical educator, Participant A reaffirmed, "Number one, I enjoy it; I enjoy it a lot. When you have those days when you are exhausted and just not enjoying it, you need to ask yourself why are you there?" (TQ, p. 9).

Participant B also spoke about her joy in teaching physical education and was adamant about her students needing to have fun within the context of a supportive learning environment. She discussed why she believes that she has had success in teaching physical education: "I think, really, the key is that I have fun with it. I am a salesperson for the subject, and I feel that I believe in what I am teaching and I like what I am teaching" (TQ, p. 7).

Participant B also used a metaphor to describe her role as a PE teacher:

> I have become a lifestyle and not just a class for my students. I really was just a class before, but now I am much closer to being a lifestyle. Your health and PE classes should be the most important classes in school, and this is something I have truly come to believe in. (TQ, p. 6)

Personal Fulfillment, High Expectations, and Commitment

The final theme linked three topics together within the category of passion for the field of physical education: personal fulfillment, maintaining high expectations of both oneself and others, and possessing a strong commitment to teaching physical education. Although each of the three topics was not identified by each participant, they are presented because of their contributions to the theme of developing and maintaining passion for physical education.

Participant B was a very open and willing participant in this study in terms of freely stating what she felt. It was obvious during our interview that she receives a

tremendous amount of personal fulfillment from her job. I asked her if she enjoyed anything in particular about her role as her school's physical education teacher, and she responded, "The kids just make me smile when they learn something or when they understand a concept and are having fun. Just to be able to share my knowledge with them as a captive audience is great" (TQ, p. 9).

Participant B added that as a PE teacher, she senses that she has an additional responsibility in the school: to encourage students to come to her when they have a problem. In her view the PE teacher is often seen as a person who is more willing than the teachers of other subject areas to give a little bit more to her students because of all of his or her extracurricular involvements (TN, p. 9).

Participants A and D showed their commitment to their job through their high expectations and demands of both themselves and their students. Participant A stated, "I demand a lot from my students, but also ask a lot of myself. I put myself on the line for my students" (TQ, p.7).

Participant D is self-motivated and demanding of herself and was honest when she described herself as a veteran teacher who loves what she does:

> I want to do really well at everything. I want to try new things, and I want to be good right away. I don't have a lot of patience to let things just work out. I am at a stage in my life now where I am feeling that this is now coming around and that I am putting a program in place here that I am feeling very happy about. (TQ, p. 3)

As Participant C contemplated his role in the school community, he frequently alluded to his commitment to his job. His own personal fulfillment seems to have come from the pride he takes in offering a successful elementary PE program, but in his own estimation, what he does daily deserves no more recognition than anything that any other employee in the school does. For him, offering a successful program is just part of his

job. With regard to his philosophy on teaching physical education, he confidently explained:

> I just try to come to school every day and say to myself that I am here for the day, this is my job, and I am here for the kids, and I try to make sure that any decision I make is for the benefit of the kids. (TQ, p. 3)

He added:

> The energy I need from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. is pretty high. I have kids every half hour, and the kids need the best half hour from me that I can give. They are always fresh, and I need to be fresh for them as well. It's difficult sometimes, but as a professional I have no choice. (TQ, p. 3)

Finally, in another comment, Participant C also emphasized his commitment to his job and to meeting the high demands that he places on himself and those around him:

> The students like it when I set high expectations for them. They like me to raise the bar and challenge them. They like high expectations and to know that I care. But they also like the structure and that I am fair. (TQ, p. 8)

Participant C concluded his comments by saying, "The students know that I believe that PE should be number one in our school. They have heard me say that PE is the heart and soul of our school" (TQ, p. 8).

CHAPTER 5:

INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action. (John Dewey, 1859-1952)

Introducing the Interpretations and Discussion

In this chapter I interpret and discuss the findings of the previous chapter in relation to the literature review presented in Chapter 2, and I offer three sections of interpretation and discussion. The first section highlights the various themes that were this study's major findings and that are grounded in previously conducted research. The second section focuses on other themes from the study, which, although not identified specifically as being grounded in the literature, are very important to this particular study because they emerged within the context of the lives of all four research participants. The third section highlights each participant, and I discuss the most prevalent themes in his or her particular case. Each participant possesses unique characteristics and is ultimately a product of his or her own personal experiences and distinctive teaching environment.

The discussion of the issues below is guided by the research question, Why do current physical education teachers engage in their practice as they do?

Interpretations and Discussion: Grounded in Literature

I have identified a total of six specific themes as major influences on the current teaching practice of the four participants in this study. These themes have not been ranked but are presented as themes that emerged and are firmly grounded in previous literature. I have highlighted each theme because it contains valuable information that has

helped me to improve my understanding of whom the participating teachers are and why they engage in their practice as they do. The six themes are (a) evolution and maturity, (b) caring for students, (c) options and variety for students, (d) professional development and self-improvement, (e) varied teaching styles, and (f) reflection.

Evolution and Maturity

As a theme unto itself, teachers' experiences may be the single most important factor effecting change within their practice. For all of the participants in this study, their personal and professional evolutions led to significant changes in how they taught and thought about the subject of physical education. Pieron and Carreiro da Costa (1996) studied exceptional teachers of physical education and analyzed their tendencies, thoughts, and perceptions. One finding was that exceptional teachers are highly motivated to learn and that they learn more from their own teaching than ordinary teachers do.

Previous research supports this current study's findings in that all of the participants directly attributed their personal development to their maturity and growth through experience. Fuller's (1969) teacher development model, which progresses through three stages from a teacher's concern about self to concerns about tasks, to concerns about students and the impact of teaching is highly applicable to the respective participants in this study and is further supported by the work of Fuller & Bown (1975), and Kagan (1992). Participant A expressed his maturity and evolution as a teacher as follows:

> I have definitely evolved. I think that, looking back, I probably focused much more time on the program. I set up my lesson plans, and I organized my teaching and classroom management in a way that I was going to "deliver the goods." With experience, I now realize that although the program is important and I have to try

> and stay focused on the end, I am dealing with people and a whole lot of different expectations. (TQ, p. 4)

Participant B has also valued her time in the profession:

> I think through experience I have gotten stronger. I remember when I was a first-year teacher, I was nowhere near as strong as I am now. Although I possessed the skills, they were not very refined. I know I was not as strong in my teaching when I started, but I am a lot stricter now than my first year. I have become much stronger in my teaching, and I know it's because of experience in working with different children and different co-workers. (TQ, p. 4)

In both of these examples the teachers who believed that they had changed had taught in schools for 10 and 5 years, respectively. The changes resulted in a more tolerant approach to program planning as well as increased refinement and confidence as professionals.

The depth in which Participant A explained his personal maturation indicated a thoughtful and honest analysis of himself as a teacher and shows his willingness to address his faults. He clearly articulated how his approach to correcting his mistakes had changed, and he noted the resulting improvements in his practice.

The depth in which Participant B explained her growth and maturity indicates an honest attempt to describe herself; however, her discussion seems to have focused predominantly on her improved classroom-management skills and her overall increased rigidity as a teacher. The changes to her personal teaching philosophy and her definition of *physical education*, for example, did not seem to waver and the meaningful changes that she seems to have experienced involve the kind of issues that some may perceive as typical for less experienced teachers.

The two most senior participants in the study provided a more philosophical explanation of their personal growth and maturity as educators. For Participant D, experience resulted in her developing into more of a leader than she had been earlier in

her career (TN, p. 1). Participant C was able to look deep into his own persona and admit to his own personal shortcomings and past errors. He has matured to a point where he is very aware of his role in teaching physical education and realizes that he is only one small part of the bigger picture of educating students and improving their overall development (TN, p. 2).

The maturation of all participants in the study parallels Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship-of-observation model which discusses how pre-service students often "see" and "experience" their teachers from a front and centre perspective and are rarely aware of a teacher's private intentions and personal reflections on classroom events. Each of the teacher's in the study expressed a certain understanding of what they thought the complex job of teaching physical education entailed prior to embarking upon the profession, however they have learned over time what the job of teaching physical education really entails and have grown in numerous ways to become more knowledgeable, competent and reflective.

The honesty and openness expressed by all participants regarding their growth and maturity paralleled the findings of other researchers who have studied the practices of both effective and exceptional teachers of physical education. Researchers such as Beighle and Pangrazi (2002), Stirling and Belk (2002), Tan (1997), and Mawer (1995) have all explored the characteristics of effective teachers of physical education and the successes that come from effectively planning programs and teaching them. From these studies one can surmise that experience alone may be the single most crucial factor that separates the effective teacher of physical education from the exceptional one.

As I have previously stated, I believe that a physical education teacher's personal experience may possibly be the most important factor in permanent and meaningful change in practice. Because of the personal and private interviews that I conducted with each participant in this study, I feel strongly about making such a statement because the participants' numerous comments on experience and maturity provided the data for me to draw this conclusion.

Caring for Students

Above all else, the genuine sincerity with which all of the teachers in this study spoke about their students emerged as perhaps the main reason that these teachers chose and continue to work in the field of public education. They often referred to their desire to reach as many students as possible and stressed that their new focus is now clearly on students' needs and no longer on their personal needs as teachers. For example, Participant A stated, "If anything has changed in my career, it is that I am now trying to reach as many kids as I can" (TQ, p. 2).

When I asked Participant C how he had changed in his career as a physical education teacher, he replied:

> I think now I look at the bigger picture more. I am more concerned with my students' needs and not so much about my needs. If I need to adjust my lesson I will, and my personal needs are no longer as important as my students' needs. (TQ, pp. 6-7)

Fuller & Bown (1975) found that younger and generally less experienced teachers move through a phase of being less concerned with issues about *self* and more concerned about their students. As well, the above comments are similar to the findings of Manross and Templeton (1997), who reported that highly competent teachers hold themselves

accountable for their students' learning. Exceptional teachers are often very objective and extremely honest in identifying their shortcomings in teaching and quickly try to rectify their personal inadequacies to ensure that their students are not jeopardized and that their full learning potential can be realized.

Both female participants in this study also acknowledged their desire to connect with their learners on a more personal level and felt that doing so is paramount in fostering a respectful and productive teaching-learning relationship. As Participant D stated, "I have to connect with every student, and especially those kids with a lower skill level and/or lower social skills. I have to make them feel comfortable right away" (TQ, p. 9).

Participant B's desire to connect with her students demonstrates how much she enjoys being around them, but also allows her to maintain organization and discipline. While observing her classes, I noticed an energy, enthusiasm, and joy that validated for me that she has a genuine love for her students. Her belief in the need to interact with students as a means of connecting with them, while at the same time supervising them, was supported by Hastie and Siedentop (1999), who found that students are least likely to be off task when the teacher interacts with them and are most likely to work diligently when the teacher is directly involved in their learning and in close proximity to them at all times.

It was not surprising that, along with expressing care and compassion for their learners, all of the participants used the term *respect* during our interviews. These teachers believed that they had to show respect for their students and that the students had to show respect for their teachers, fellow classmates, the equipment, and the learning

environment. Participant A's experience has taught him that every student is equally important and that his actions towards everyone always need to be consistent. He spoke about his true caring and respect for students:

> On a personal level, students have taught me to be fair to them and to treat them age appropriately. You have to treat them at the level that they are at. Some kids are very mature, and you can talk to them in a different way than some of the kids that are immature. (TQ, p. 9)

Other effective teachers have also demonstrated the participants' kind of deep concern and respect for students. Such researchers as Ballinger (1993), Beighle and Pangrazi (2002), and Zounhia et al. (2002) found that effective teachers have the same high degree of respect and concern for their students that the participants in this current study reported.

These teachers were working with students whose ages ranged from 5 to 17 years, but the need for respect is equally important for all teachers regardless of the environment in which they work and the age of their students. They all have the highest regard for respect, which I sensed has become increasingly important for them as they have gained more and more experience in their careers.

All of the teachers in this study were aware that their success in the classroom depends highly on respecting their students and motivating them intrinsically. As Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) noted, "Effective teachers always treat children with respect. They speak with the child quickly, privately, and in a tone addressing the behavior of the child" (p. 7). Similarly, teachers who are accepting treat all students with respect regardless of their behavior or achievement level. Effective teachers may reject inappropriate behaviors, but these teachers separate behaviors from judgmental labeling of students (Ballinger, 1993; Zounhia et al., 2002).

Care and respect are two qualities that the participants frequently mentioned. These attributes may not have been as obvious or seemingly as worthwhile earlier in the careers of these teachers, but they now view them as essential parts of their personalities.

Options and Variety for Students

Except for Participant C, all of the teachers spoke of the need to offer a physical education program that provides student choice and variety in the learning environment. Participant C bases his actions in his classroom on his elementary-education environment in which he has many classes, and only a short period of time to teach his lessons. Furthermore, his philosophy supports his belief that his responsibility is to instruct the students and help them to develop foundational knowledge in the subject of physical education. He felt that providing many options and a great deal of variety for his learners would be a potentially inappropriate use of his valuable time and that he needs to develop specific skill sets and appropriate movement patterns in his learners so that they will learn to enjoy movement and experience success when they are older and have become more responsible for their personal learning.

Previous research has supported Participant C's belief that the teacher should be in charge of the students' learning and implement a program with a routine that all learners can understand and follow. In discussing classroom ecology, both Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) and Manross and Templeton (1997) reported that exceptional teachers often have established routines for many aspects of their teaching and classroom proceedings and that exceptional teachers working within a structured physical education context are generally quite relaxed and able to create a pervasive air of efficiency. I agree with these statements, and when I observed Participant C's teaching, I noticed his relaxed

and confident demeanor. Because of his organization and established routine, the classes he teaches are highly energetic, with an underlying emphasis on skill acquisition. The time (approximately 30 minutes) was utilized very effectively, and all students were engaged in appropriate learning from the start of the class to the concluding activity.

Participant D's experience in teaching physical education has resulted in a program in which she has built a structure to ensure that a student is neither excluded from learning nor involved in activities beyond his or her ability level. She described her approach as follows:

> What I like to do is offer a lot of options in my class. I give them [students] options of doing tasks at different levels that will best serve their individual needs. I will offer the students different equipment as well. I do modify a lot of things, but [as a young teacher] I did not intentionally go into my lessons with that purpose originally in mind. (TQ, p. 5)

Manross and Templeton (1997), who inquired into the practices of exceptional teachers of physical education, supported this approach to planning and teaching physical education and concluded that "experts find a variety of ways for effectively communicating instructions, goals, and objectives" (p. 32) and that experts are also extremely skilled at creating highly organized, yet flexible plans with activity alternatives and various explanations for students.

Ballinger (1993) researched highly effective teachers of physical education and noted that these teachers tailor the level of information to the readiness of each student. During his career Participant A has acquired this ability to judge the readiness of students. In discussing his teaching and planning and the subsequent options and variety that he offers his students, he concluded:

> I think that whenever you think of an activity or part of a lesson, you must provide options, and so there may not be one single way to do something. You must provide these options to the students, and with those options you are giving them the opportunity to make a decision that allows them to choose their level of success. (TQ, p. 10)

The desire of both Participant A and Participant D to provide their high-school-aged students with variety and options has become a staple in their planning and instruction. They have come to understand that their programs need to be meaningful and relevant for their students and that they can no longer plan lessons and units to suit their personal needs, but must plan appealing and motivating lessons for their pupils. These educators' underlying assumption is that they are working with students who already come to their classes with adequate skill sets and competencies in physical education beyond an introductory level. Problems arise in their classes when a large disparity in skills exists among students. When this problem occurs, Participants A and D offer remedial instruction and often use a more direct instructional approach with those students who require additional instruction and practice time.

Providing variety and options is certainly a sound pedagogical approach because it increases the students' sense of responsibility and ownership of their learning. On the other hand, a more structured approach is beneficial in dealing with learners who have limited or unrefined psychomotor skills. A teacher's tact and proficiency in setting up his or her learning environment are crucial in this entire process. A program too rigid in its setup will alienate and, in some cases, drive learners away from wanting to be part of the educational experience, whereas a program with too much variety and too many student options may result in a poor learning environment with limited structure and means of assessing actual progress and learning.

Professional Development and Self-Improvement

As separate themes, I have highlighted professional development and self-improvement as unique entities in the professional lives of all four research participants. However, to discuss the importance of each theme with regard to their professional careers, I have chosen to combine them.

Without question, professional development leads to self-improvement (Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002). For the participants in this study, their belief and subsequent involvement in professional development are part of the job of being successful physical education teachers. The depth and understanding of what *professional development* means evolved with maturity and experience. They provided clear evidence in support of this perception of professional development. Participant C spoke with passion when discussing how professional development has impacted his career: "A belief in professional development is very important. To be involved in your professional associations and organizations is critical. They not only reenergize me, but also create a lot of opportunities to learn new information" (TQ, p. 4).

Participant A also had strong feelings about how his involvement in professional development activities has allowed him to become the type of teacher that he is:

> I think the format of becoming more professional is different for me than it was earlier in my career. I used to think that if I went to a conference or inservice and I was gathering more information and knowledge, it was like adding more Cub Scout badges. (TQ, p. 11)

None of the four teachers in this study view their involvement in professional development opportunities as obligatory, but rather as a natural part of their evolution. They often mentioned their need to improve themselves and their desire to continue learning for the sake of their students. These beliefs are major elements of their teaching

philosophies and have been found to be important for all teachers (Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002; Mawer, 1995).

Furthermore, Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) found that highly effective teachers of physical education continually and consistently seek improvements in their teaching practice and are rarely, if ever, satisfied with their current abilities. Likewise, Mawer (1995) reported that highly effective teachers are rarely completely satisfied with their teaching and that they continually strive to improve their practice.

For the experienced Participant D, professional development has come to mean many different things. The acquired knowledge from attending conventions and conferences is just one component of her professional development agenda. She has come to realize that engaging in conversations with like-minded professionals, both locally and internationally, is highly valuable. As well, by continually traveling and experiencing different cultures and communities, she continues to be enlightened and educated in numerous ways.

Through her own admission, Participant D is hard on herself and always strives for perfection in her planning and teaching (TN, p. 4). Unfortunately, teachers can never achieve perfection (Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002), but the desire to want to be the best results in continual acquisition of knowledge that ultimately benefits all students under the tutelage of a highly driven teacher.

Participant B was animated when she discussed her views of professional development and her determination to improve herself as a young teacher of physical education. Her awareness of the value of consistently trying to improve herself was duly noted. Although she realized that she still has a great deal to learn and that her general

knowledge in the field is still inadequate, Participant B discussed her self-improvement only in terms of needing to continue to attend conferences and to acquire information solely from them. As well, the wisdom she seeks to acquire seem to involve only learning more games and gaining more knowledge about safety in various sports. She stated, "I have increased my knowledge in different sports, and I have been able to learn more about safety in the classroom and adapt my teaching to ensure student safety is maintained" (TQ, p. 5).

As Participant B adds to her five years of experience in the profession, she will probably enhance her understanding of the term *professional development*. Peiron and Carreiro da Costa (1996) inquired into the practices of both experienced and inexperienced physical education teachers. They reported many interesting findings and found that younger and less experienced teachers are often highly motivated to learn, but choose to learn mainly things that are quickly absorbed and easily put into their daily practice.

As well, a teacher with limited experience in the field has had a shorter exposure to critical incidents and teaching situations than more experienced teachers have. Thus, whereas exceptional (and more experienced) teachers of physical education draw from their past experiences when they are forced to deal with a problem or new situation, novice teachers base most of their actions and responses on textbook responses and nonpractical situations (Chorney, 2000; Pieron & Carreiro da Costa, 1996; Fuller & Bown, 1975).

Thus, the underlying meaning for me as a researcher is that experience plays a large role in developing an understanding of the value of professional development as

well as what teachers need to specifically learn in becoming more effective teachers. All of the teachers in this study recognized the importance of continual acquisition of knowledge and its role in making them stronger and more reflective practitioners. However, the depth to which each teacher understands the meanings of *professional development* and *self-improvement* will likely continue to evolve and probably depends on teaching experience and exposure to the field in general.

The themes of professional development and self-improvement have significantly influenced the personal and professional lives of the participants in this study. The impact of each theme has affected each individual according to his or her experience, personal philosophy, motivation, and situational context. These themes are significant factors in the lives of these physical educators, who are perceived to be exemplars in the field. They are all passionate about their jobs and are respected by their peers as highly effective model educators.

Varied Teaching Styles

The participants in this study generally use varied and diverse approaches to instruct their students. At all times they are aware of their learners' needs and use the most appropriate methods for each situation. The willingness of the participants to seek out new materials, methods and strategies parallels the findings of Lynn (2002) and Fessler (1992) who found that highly competent and effective teachers move through this developmental stage towards even higher levels of self-improvement over their careers.

Participant A's use of various teaching styles has resulted from his maturity and experience. Not only have his personal beliefs changed how he teaches, but also, out of necessity, he has become more creative and innovative in his teaching. He explained:

> I think what I have now is a wide variety of styles that I can use based on who my audience is and based on the material that I have. I think I am a pretty good judge of what is working, and if I need to change or adapt something, I have that ability to do so. (TQ, p. 5)

This wide variety of styles includes a breadth of strategies ranging from a direct-oriented approach to teaching to a more student-oriented approach in which the teacher acts as a facilitator to learning and supports student-led initiatives.

According to Ballinger (1993), "Expert instructors communicate new information to students using multiple examples and styles of teaching, which match the learning style of their students" (p. 14). Manross and Templeton (1997) supported this finding as well by stating: "Expert teachers search for new and fresh methods for teaching familiar subject matter, while less expert teachers settle for business as usual" (p. 33).

Participant D expressed her views on the use of varied teaching styles and commented that she had learned to be more flexible in her planning and was no longer worried if a lesson did not unfold exactly as she had hoped. Throughout her career she has come to understand that forcing a lesson, rather than adapting and changing, usually results in a tense learning environment and an unproductive use of class time:

> Flexibility in the planning and implementing of each lesson is critical. You have to be able to see everything in class and be able to switch the plan on the go if a lesson is not going how you expected it to. Always have a plan and be willing to change if need be. (TQ, p. 3)

As I listened to Participant B describe her approach to teaching, I was impressed with the maturity in her approach from originally employing simply a direct method of instruction to using more student-directed approaches and less rigid styles. Mawer (1995) and Stirling and Belk (2002) supported this approach to planning and instruction; they

found that effective teachers are often involved in using varied teaching styles that appeal to all types of learners.

A young and relatively inexperienced teacher who has taught only in elementary- and middle-school environments will often be inclined to teach by using primarily a command-style method, which entails maintaining total control of the class and charting the course of where it should be headed at all times. To her credit, although Participant B began her career as a control type of teacher, she has learned to release some of her control to her learners.

Based on his wealth of knowledge and experience, Participant C, developed a rationale for utilizing a primarily teacher-directed approach. He believed that he must adopt this approach because of his schedule and its time constraints:

> My primary teaching style can be considered teacher directed. I demonstrate, and then the students try the skills. We do some station work and have even tried some peer teaching, but a lot of what I do will depend on the makeup of my class. I have such a high number of students, so I try to prioritize activity and movement in the 30 minutes that I have. Things have to be very structured. (TQ, p. 6)

To his credit, and through my observation, Participant C managed to get the most out of every lesson that he taught. Moreover, as Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) discovered, exceptional teachers often have established routines in their classes and are able to cover a considerable amount of material, even in brief periods of time.

I observed the quiet confidence and ease with which Participant C taught his classes, and it was truly admirable because he was dealing with elementary-aged learners who were often very excited and occasionally distracted. I also observed his astonishing ability to communicate content clearly and concisely. As Stirling and Belk (2002) found,

Participant C's personal teaching skills are typical of those of effective physical educators.

As a theme, utilizing varied teaching styles and planning for alternative methods of instruction is a critical component in the participants' teaching. Because of their maturity, experience, and evolution as professional educators, all four participants have realized what works best for them in their respective school environments. The literature supported using varied teaching styles to improve the learning and skill acquisition of students in the physical education context (Beighle & Pangrazi, 2002; Manross & Templeton, 1997; Mawer, 1995; Stirling & Belk, 2002).

During my observations of and interviews with the participants, I clearly realized the need for diversity and creativity in instruction. The changes that have occurred in the practice of the research participants resulted from listening to their students and realizing that diversity in instruction is vital to creating meaningful learning opportunities.

Reflection

All participants believed that critical reflective practice is important in their personal and professional lives. Unlike many undergraduate students in faculties of education across the country who equate the term *reflection* with a *forced chore*, these seasoned professionals value the art and science of reflection and embrace it as part of their regular routine as teachers. To some degree, they all involve themselves in the reflective process. In his daily practice Participant A utilizes reflection to improve his teaching, and he explained that he has grown as a professional by making the kinds of changes that he perceives are necessary. He commented:

> I am able to realize that I have to adjust my teaching to meet students' personal needs. My brain is always looking to change, and I am paraphrasing and

> constantly changing the activities to meet the needs of those that I am dealing with. (TQ, p. 3)

As Beighle and Pangrazi (2002) discovered in their research, reflection is important in many ways in the practice of effective physical education teachers. For instance, these researchers affirmed, "Reflection allows successful teachers to alter their teaching to enhance efficiency, improve management, or improve the quality of the lesson" (p. 9).

When Participant C spoke of his value for reflection, he revealed that it had made specific improvements in his teaching. Although he did not employ any formal techniques such as journaling or record keeping, he was quick to comment that reflection is part of his practice: "I think I understand the bigger picture better regarding PE. I ask myself now, what can I do to help the subject? Is it just about modeling a program, or more?" (TQ, p. 7).

Both Participants B and D utilize reflection in a more structured format than their other two colleagues do. On the one hand, Participant B uses a daily journal to record her thoughts and musings, whereas Participant D stated that she *has* to keep a professional portfolio in which she writes down her personal and professional goals for each academic year. Both teachers discussed the value of what they are doing. In addition to simply writing down reflective thoughts and ideas on how to improve their practice, they also enjoy the opportunity to sit back at the end of the school day and either quietly reflect alone or discuss with colleagues the events and issues that are part of their daily professional lives.

Participants A, C, and D all gave a sincere and philosophical response to my question about reflection and stated that it had positively changed their practices over the

years. They had experienced many changes in their personal and professional lives, and because, for the most part, they were not forced to practice reflection, it had become less of a chore and more of an inherent part of their own professional development.

The idea of becoming a reflective practitioner and concerning oneself with only one's inward needs is something that should not be done exclusively. Harter (1997) suggested that a balance between understanding *self* and the *other* is essential and although being a reflective practitioner is critically important for a teacher to develop into a more sensitive and thoughtful educator, the shift of focus towards a more outward perspective [focus on students] is equally desirable. By openly and honestly being able to critique themselves, these teachers have become acutely aware of their personal strengths as educators and are able to modify their practices to improve their teaching. They use reflection to effect change in their practice and, ultimately, to teach better and improve learning for their students. That is, they engaged in reflective-on and/or reflective-in-action.

Interpretations and Discussion: Not Grounded in Literature

Four significant findings from the study, although not grounded in specific research, have had a very important impact on the participants' professional lives: (a) the meaning of physical education, (b) confidence, (c) a belief and joy in teaching physical education, and (d) personal fulfillment and commitment to the job.

Meaning of Physical Education

As a theme, the meaning of *physical education* emerged as an important topic that warrants further investigation. For all of the participants in this research study, its meaning is complex, and their personal definitions were thorough and substantive. None

felt that physical education meant simply the teaching and learning of sport-specific skills. Rather, the participants' definitions had a depth that included aspects of health, wellness, social justice, leadership and cooperation, lifelong commitment to activity, and the affective and cognitive dimensions of learning. The stereotypical definition of merely learning and mastering sport skills was never the sole focus. When I asked Participant A about his personal beliefs about the meaning of physical education, his reply included the above qualities:

> I think the PE community has come to realize that there is now a shift in attitude and that PE is not just about elite sports, and it's not even about teaching sports! It's about being active and active living and trying to get everybody on board about enjoying physical activity. (TQ, p. 12)

Participant B echoed these thoughts when she explained what she perceived physical education to mean for today's youth:

> My philosophy is not "old school" and teaching just traditional sports. I don't really do that, but rather I focus on active living and enjoyment of activity for students. I try to teach the kids a whole realm of things, so we do individual activities and games. I am trying to provide opportunities for them and promote healthy active alternatives for the rest of their lives. (TQ, p. 1)

Participant B further discussed her personal feelings about physical education and her values: "I want my students to understand that PE is a whole lifestyle and not just a class" (TQ, p. 2).

For Participant C, the meaning of physical education has changed significantly over his 15-year career. He was a sports-oriented teacher early in his career, but he quickly realized that not all students were going to be high-level athletes (TN, p. 2). He summed up his current thoughts on the meaning of physical education:

> I want my students to understand that activity is something that is a necessary part of their life. It is something that they should do every day just like brushing their teeth. With elementary students they can understand this logic. (TQ, p. 2)

Participant D reflected on her personal meaning of physical education for some time and contemplated how she had grown as a professional over the past two decades. Physical education has a more powerful meaning for her now than it had some 20 years earlier. The depth in which she spoke about its meaning was heartfelt and genuine, and her reply became increasingly passionate as she spoke. She summarized the meaning of physical education as follows: "There is a more broad perspective to my teaching now—looking at things from a transferable perspective and not so much as a skill unto itself" (TQ, p. 8). As well, she succinctly stated, "There is more of a purpose now in the way PE is taught besides just fitness, and teaching students how to simply play the game is not enough" (TQ, pp. 11-12).

I was comforted to learn that in today's schools some of the best physical educators have a more expansive opinion of the meaning of physical education than was typical in the past. All of these educators have grown in their professional lives and define physical education now more comprehensively than they had previously. Their views of physical education are complex and have resulted from their experiences as educators and from listening to their students. As well, their faith in the current provincial curriculum and their recognition that people's physical fitness is generally declining are additional factors that contribute to their current beliefs.

The significant value that they place on health, wellness, and improving relationships among all students helped to define who these exceptional teachers are. In light of the current provincial movement in Alberta to initiate daily physical activity

within school curricula, all four of these physical educators are strongly positioned both philosophically and technically to be leaders in the field for years to come.

Confidence

As a theme, confidence was apparent in the comments of all of the participants. They may be confident because of their youthful success as well-rounded athletes and their relative lack of failure in or fear of sports and athletics. As well, the more veteran teachers in this study may be confident in their abilities because of their high level of personal comfort after teaching for many years and learning from their numerous teaching experiences. In any case, all four participants saw themselves as competent and confident teachers who are performing a job to best match the needs of their learners. Their ability to connect with all learners and the ability to modify teaching situations are just two examples of why these professionals are so confident. Participant A spoke about his vision for all students and his ability to judge students on their potential:

> I see and have a vision for the end of the lesson. I can see where I want my students to be, and I have good judgment of potential. I think I am also a pretty good motivator, and I can get kids engaged, moving, and excited. (TQ, p. 4)

Participant B also summed up her self-confidence: "I live what I teach, and the students can see this. I am a model for them both in and out of class" (TQ, p. 8). She felt that she is respected and admired for living the life of an active and healthy physical education teacher. Her passion and commitment to a healthy lifestyle undoubtedly have had positive effects on her students, who displayed their enthusiasm in class when I observed her teaching.

Participant C's confidence was obvious in the gymnasium during the day that I observed his teaching. From the start to the end of the school day, his demeanor was

inviting and respectful. He commented that his peers, the administration, parents, and students all respect his work as the school's physical education teacher and believe that he is the school's most popular teacher:

> I think the kids here would probably consider me the most popular teacher because of the subject that I teach. They really like PE, and they see me a lot and I am easy to talk to. They like me in many ways and know I have boundaries, so they don't want to get into trouble with me. (TQ, pp. 7-8)

Participant D is proud of the job she is doing in her school and was excited about what the future held for her there as a teacher. Her confidence is high, and she thought that her colleagues and administrators saw her as being very good at what she did (TN, p. 8). She summarized her opinion of her own teaching ability: "I have the ability and desire to reach kids at all different levels. I am able to modify what I have in my head to best suit the personal needs of each student" (TQ, p. 9).

Although when I asked, the teachers gave ample evidence of their self-confidence and faith in their abilities, they did not seem overconfident. In fact, they more openly discussed their deficiencies and the areas that need improvement than they did their strengths. It is apparent that their motivation and interest in teaching physical education are genuine, and their desire to continue to partake in professional development activities is a sign of their professionalism and willingness to further increase their personal competence and confidence.

Belief and Joy in Teaching Physical Education

In my interviews and observations of the participants in this study, their belief in their jobs was a common theme. Their genuine passion and the joy that they receive from

teaching are enviable, because these qualities directly influence these teachers in their daily practice.

Both Participants B and D used the word *love* to express how they felt about their jobs. Participant D commented, "I still love my job and can see myself continuing to teach PE until I retire" (TQ, p. 12), and "I think it's a passion of mine. I think any teacher who is passionate does better because passion is passed on to the students regardless of the subject" (TQ, p. 9). Participant B was excited when she discussed her love of the teaching profession and spoke at length about her enjoyment in teaching in her school: "I love it! I love teaching PE and being active and promoting a healthy lifestyle" (TQ, p. 3).

For both these teachers, doing something in their lives other than teaching is unthinkable. A sincere belief in teaching physical education and its numerous benefits for students, are inherent in these teachers and evident in every aspect of their teaching. Their modeling behavior is commendable, and their daily energy and vitality in their classrooms reveal their devotion to and sense of responsibility for their students, their schools, and their discipline.

Participants A and C express their joy and belief in their jobs through their involvement in community and professional activities. Both demonstrate their belief in their jobs through their willingness to sit on committees and maintain executive positions on various local and national councils or associations. All of these organizations focus on improving the field of physical education, student health, and overall well-being, as well as on helping to effect change for local schools and communities.

Participant C is proud of his role as his school's physical education teacher and values his job very highly. His passion results from his students' achievements and their

changed perceptions of physical education. His many years of dedication to the field of physical education seem to have benefited him, and when I asked what he valued most about his job, he responded:

> To have the kids come into a subject that I truly care about and see the excitement on their faces; to realize that I am hopefully keeping them turned on to this discipline, and by coming into my class, I am broadening their horizons so that they may choose a particular activity to be involved with in the future. I hope that I can give my students the sense that PE is important, that I [each child] am important as a person, and that all activity is good for me. (TQ, p. 10)

Participant A shared a tremendous amount of information that demonstrated his belief in his job, and he spoke at length about his perceptions of his role as a physical education teacher in his school. He does not believe that his role as a PE teacher is limited solely to the classroom, field, or gymnasium, but views himself as an advocate for the discipline at all times, and he has tried to convince all educational stakeholders of the benefits of supporting quality physical education in our schools.

When Participant A spoke about his feelings for physical education and his job as a teacher, he stated, "Number one, I enjoy it; I enjoy it a lot. When you have those days when you are exhausted and just not enjoying it, you need to ask yourself why are you there?" (TQ, p. 9).

None of the participants in the study complained about their heavy workload or their colleagues' and administrators' high expectations. In fact, they appeared to relish their roles within their respective schools and to see the role of physical education teacher as more complex and integral to the school than the roles of some of their colleagues who taught other subjects. Obviously, this perception is debatable; however, these teachers strongly believe that they are very valuable to their school community, and they take great pride and joy from the responsibility afforded them.

Personal Fulfillment and Commitment

This theme is similar and related to the previous theme of belief and joy in teaching, and the information that the participants provided revealed their ability to experience personal fulfillment each day and to be committed to their jobs. These teachers have extremely high expectations of themselves as educators and leaders within their schools and expect their students to be responsible and motivated learners.

In discussing the personal fulfillment that she experiences as a middle-years physical education teacher, Participant B glowingly praised her students and credited them for being the source of her job satisfaction: "The kids just make me smile when they learn something or when they understand a concept and are having fun. Just to be able to share my knowledge with them as a captive audience is great" (TQ, p. 9).

Her youthful demeanor and vitality in teaching have allowed her to maintain a very high pace of performance in her current job while always being cheerful and enthusiastic around her students. Her ability to balance a new marriage, a rigorous workout schedule, and commitment to her job is impressive, but it made me wonder which, if any, of these commitments could or would suffer first if her fast-paced lifestyle continued. To her credit, everything seemed to be moving along well, and her commitment to her teaching and coaching responsibilities are of paramount importance to her.

Participant C's sense of personal fulfillment from teaching physical education seems to have resulted from his pride in his program. During his career he has made many contributions to the school community, but he acknowledged that he is tired and that he occasionally feels taken advantage of by others. However, much of what he does

he considers to be part of his job, and he did not complain about his volunteer activities. He explained:

> I just try to come to school every day and say to myself that I am here for the day, this is my job, and I am here for the kids, and I try to make sure that any decision I make is always for the benefit of the students. (TQ, p. 3)

Participant C can be described as the consummate professional who gives all that he has to his job and at the end of the day wonders how he could have done more. He is obviously admired and respected for the job he has done and continues to do in his school, and he eagerly anticipates the future as he continues to improve and refine his art.

Although the job of teaching physical education is complex and often receives an unfavorable critique from the average citizen, all four participants in this study are proud to be physical education teachers and live their lives as though their occupation is better than any other. Their actions speak louder than their words, and their joy and commitment to the field are genuine and inspirational. In my extended conversations and limited observations, I felt happy for all of the students who have had the privilege of learning from and being part of the educational experience that these teachers provide.

After analyzing the comments of each participant, I know now that these teachers are the ones who feel privileged and honored to have had their students as a part of their lives, because their personal interactions with their students and the lessons that they have learned from them and from colleagues have taught the participants to be the kind of teachers that they are. Their personal growth and maturation have led them to alter their practice in positive and beneficial ways, always with a consideration of their students' interests when they make changes.

Interpretations and Discussion: Overviews

All four participants in this study possess many similar characteristics and teach in different environments that are equally challenging yet fulfilling. The following descriptions are meant to summarize the very special characteristics of each teacher and to briefly outline why they engage in their teaching practice as they do. I offer the following brief overviews of four exceptional physical education teachers as a means of honoring and respecting their participation.

Participant A

Having had 10 years of experience as a Catholic high school physical education teacher, Participant A believed that he had evolved tremendously over his career. His openness and honesty demonstrated his professional growth, and he frequently stated his desire to improve as a physical education teacher. My interview with him provided numerous examples of how he had changed as a teacher, and he elaborated on them to give a clearer picture of who he is as an educator. Perhaps the primary change that has occurred in his career as a physical education teacher is his emergence as a more diverse educator who has moved far beyond simply being a technician of the field. As well, his development is such that he has modified his personal beliefs as a result of his experience (Graber, 2001).

Participant A referred to seven key themes more than any others, and I believe that he is as successful and effective as he is because of the implementation of these themes into his practice: (a) caring for students, (b) reflection on self and practice, (c) evolution and maturity as a teacher, (d) belief and joy in teaching, (e) meaning of physical education, (f) confidence, and (g) honesty with students.

In summarizing Participant A's nuances and characteristics, I would describe him as a confident teacher who is passionate about his job and takes his responsibilities very seriously. He has matured into a reflective practitioner and tries to instill the value of reflection in his students. His belief in his job has led to numerous involvements in professional development opportunities, which he values very highly. He has learned to be open and honest with his students at all times and truly values their opinions and incorporates student suggestions into his practice where possible. Conscious planning to incorporate the affective domain of learning into his classes has become extremely important to him, along with continually improving his regular assessment of students. His personal definition of physical education has evolved so that he now stresses maximum participation and cooperation in every class. Finally, Participant A values very highly the comments of fellow professionals and seeks out opportunities to communicate and network with teachers, both those who teach within the field of physical education and those who do not.

Participant B

Participant B has five years of experience in the Catholic elementary- and middle-school environments. As a physical education major, she has taught the subject almost exclusively but has recently been assigned to teach health education and French language. Her energy is high, and her love of teaching is second to none. After not having had a very enjoyable physical education experience in high school, this teacher decided to become the type of teacher she had never had herself.

Participant B evolved into a physical education teacher, but not through Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship-of-observation model. Instead of imitating her mentor teacher, she

used her time as an undergraduate student to internalize the profession and put into practice the early stages of what has now become a very formalized process of reflection. Her development process has allowed her to continually become the kind of physical education teacher that she has always wanted to be.

The five main themes emerging from our interview include (a) caring for students, (b) confidence in her ability, (c) belief and joy in teaching, (d) self-improvement, and (e) experience and evolution. Participant B often alluded to these themes and discussed them from the start of the interview to its conclusion. I realized that she has a deep regard for her students and that she wants her students to like her as a beginning teacher. She mentioned that her desire to be liked has frequently resulted in management issues and eventually led to a change in focus in terms of her teaching philosophy and teaching style.

Participant B is a teacher who has admitted her faults and through her admissions has been able to improve her practice and became a stronger teacher in each year of her employment. She strongly believes in her role as the school's physical education teacher and relishes the responsibilities associated with that title.

For a younger teacher with minimal tenure, she is confident in her abilities and credits her evolution into an improved teacher to her past experiences. As a teacher who admits that she still needs to develop in many ways, she has identified classroom management and organization as the two key areas for her immediate focus.

Participant C

As a veteran teacher with over 15 years of teaching experience, Participant C has taught almost exclusively in the elementary public school setting. A trained specialist in

the field of physical education, he has evolved into the kind of professional who no longer focuses on his own needs, but rather dedicates his time each day to ensure that he is meeting his students' needs in the area of physical education.

Like Participant A, Participant C has evolved beyond simply being a technical teacher of the subject and has placed an ever-increasing value on student health, cooperation, trust, and respect. Many of Participant C's beliefs have been modified over his career, but his willingness to change and his admittance of his professional shortcomings have all contributed to his ongoing teacher development. As an undergraduate student he internalized the teaching profession early in his formal education and was fortunate to have had many supportive mentors during his development. His passion for the field of physical education continues to grow, and his desire to improve the health and well-being of his entire elementary-aged populace is obvious.

Nine separate themes emerged most frequently during our interview: (a) caring for students, (b) meaning of PE, (c) professional development, (d) reflection on self and others, (e) evolution and maturity, (f) confidence, (g) belief and joy in teaching, (h) honesty with students, and (i) commitment to the job.

Our interview was the longest of the four that I conducted, and Participant C's comments convinced me that he thoroughly enjoys his job and his daily interactions with students. His dedicated involvement with professional organizations and committees that focus on improving the state and image of physical education demonstrate his commitment to the field.

His experience has allowed him to reflect on his career and rethink the true meaning of physical education. As a result, he understands what children need to learn and has developed a successful method of instructing elementary-school students. His ability to connect with young learners has resulted in a program in which physical education is highly valued, so that he and the subject of physical education are regarded as essential elements in his school and surrounding community.

Participant D

As the most experienced teacher, with 22 years in the public school system, Participant D provided me with a detailed and honest account of her time as a female high school physical education teacher. Although she has had experience teaching middle-school children, she has spent most of her career with high school students.

As a physical education teacher, Participant D developed similarly to Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship-of-observation model. She was a highly energetic student who possessed physical skills and attributes that were fostered by several supportive teachers. Like her colleagues in this study, Participant D has emerged well beyond simply being an effective teacher in technical skills alone. Her willingness to hear the "student voice" and personally implement what Schon (1991) described as reflection-in-action has resulted in a very confident but humble professional.

In terms of her overall teacher development, Participant D possesses many of the characteristics and competencies identified by Graber (2001). Her willingness to continue to learn, her high commitment to professional development, and her realization that student health, leadership, and social competencies are integral factors in her physical

education program have resulted in very energetic and relevant physical education classes for her students.

Five main themes emerged from our interview: (a) caring for students, (b) options and variety for students, (c) evolution and maturity, (d) varied teaching styles, and (e) creating student enjoyment.

As a committed practitioner, Participant D views herself as a teacher who has evolved into a leader in the field of physical education by involving herself in professional organizations and furthering her education in the field of physical education and curriculum. Her growth and maturity have led her to alter her teaching philosophy, and as a result she feels that she better understands her role as a teacher of physical education. She insists on having her students take personal responsibility for their own learning and provides ample opportunities for them to challenge themselves in her daily classes. Her goal is to instill a lifelong desire in her students to be active, and she believes that this desire is one of the most important values that she can pass on to them.

Participant D has become an imaginative and creative physical education teacher and is constantly seeking new methods of improving her instruction. She attempts to connect with every student in her class and believes in the inner potential of every student. This teacher appreciates student individuality and has structured her program to allow for all learners to have choices in her classes and to achieve reasonable and attainable goals.

Through experience and evolution, Participant D has realized the importance of the affective and cognitive domains of learning in the physical education environment. As well, she tries to create a positive and supportive learning environment, and her

experience has made her realize that her role need not be simply that of a teacher, but that it can also be that of a facilitator of learning.

Conclusion

The unique personality of each participant was evident both during our interviews and informal discussions prior to and after them. The participants have a passion for their jobs and are full of energy and vitality. In all cases, their commitment to their students and the subject of physical education was highly apparent. This commitment has resulted from a great deal of experience and from critical reflection on teaching and working within a sometimes misunderstood subject area. The field of physical education is diverse and the job of teaching physical education is a complex task. Not only do teachers of physical education need to concern themselves with the practical dilemmas of funding deficiencies, lack of infrastructure and public misconceptions about our purpose as physical educators, but we must also deal with the challenges of trying to educate and motivate a generally more static and unhealthy student population who often prioritize other subject areas because they are part of an educational system that schedules and prioritizes other courses ahead of physical education.

Through their detailed statements, the participants explained why they engage in their practice as they do and expressed their belief that they have learned a great deal from their experiences. Although happy and secure in the knowledge that they are doing a competent job of teaching physical education, all of the participants were uncomfortable with the title of *exceptional teacher* and stressed that they still had too much to learn to warrant such praise.

CHAPTER 6:

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Only when the clamor of the outside world is silenced will you be able to hear the deeper vibration. (Sarah Ban Breathnach)

Personal Reflections and Recommendations

The key question posed at the outset of this study was, "Why do current physical education teachers engage in their practice as they do?" I have explored the personal and professional lives of four exceptional teachers of physical education. Some of this study's findings are congruent with those in the literature reviewed, whereas other findings reveal new information that can contribute to the research on teaching physical education. I have selected the following four categories to show the interdependencies among them and to provide groupings for the specific themes: (a) relating to/with students, (b) experiences gained through teaching, (c) self-awareness, and (d) passion for the field of physical education.

The concluding part of this section focuses on suggestions for further research and I discuss why particular research would be useful.

Relating To/With Students

The personal interactions of teachers and students may be the most vital component in determining whether or not students learn and whether teachers enjoy teaching. Preservice teachers who are eager to make their mark on the teaching profession often comment on their love for teaching and their desire to connect with every student when they eventually begin teaching. In theory, these ideals are admirable;

however, I believe that many of these teachers fall into a pattern of teaching to the masses and that their initial *love* for teaching eventually becomes a *liking* for teaching and a job that simply provides a satisfying life.

The four exceptional physical education teachers in this study began by loving their jobs and continue to do so. They have learned the importance and the necessity of connecting with all learners to meet their needs, and they see the educational value in doing so. Sincere caring for students, being open and honest with them, respecting them, and valuing their input are characteristics that only a very few physical education teachers have and, more important, act upon in their daily teaching.

The responsibility of teaching physical education well is difficult and presents challenges usually not experienced in other subject areas. These challenges include teaching students who are self-conscious about their bodies and who lack skills and coordination and the need to teach in various environments such as outdoor fields, swimming pools, large and small gymnasia, traditional classrooms, golf courses, bowling alleys, and other facilities located both indoors and outdoors. The outgoing nature of each of the participants in this study undoubtedly contributes to their success in connecting and interacting with their students and is a characteristic generally perceived to be inherent rather than learned.

Before the participants decided to become teachers, they all had well-developed communication and interpersonal skills. These skills continue to serve them well as they gain teaching experience and are assigned leadership positions and additional responsibilities within their respective schools and communities. The ability to communicate using a supportive tone and encouraging manner is a necessary skill for

teachers of physical education. Teachers without this skill often have difficulty in motivating students and creating within them a feeling of personal satisfaction.

Recommendations

1. Prior to studying in a teacher-education program for physical education, undergraduate students need to become involved in activities and to have experiences in which they can interact with people, particularly youth, to gain a better understanding of human interactions and to develop as communicators and leaders. Jobs such as those of a camp counselor, the head or assistant coach of a sports team, a church youth group leader, or a community volunteer are just some examples of experiences that will help to foster the skills required to be an effective communicator and teacher.
2. Teacher-education programs need to reconsider their application procedures. Academic grades alone should not be the primary consideration to determine whether students should be accepted into a faculty of education. In the area of physical education, students' previous experiences with children, their own skills and competencies in sports and athletics, and their philosophy or vision of what physical education involves are all critical factors that should be considered by those responsible for admitting students into a PETE program.

Experiences Gained Through Teaching

If relating to/with students is one of the most vital requirements for successfully teaching students, then experience is perhaps the most crucial factor for effecting positive changes in the teaching practice of physical educators. The experience of teaching is arguably the greatest "teacher" for teachers themselves. For all participants in this

research study, their personal experience was the key to defining and understanding who they are. The knowledge gained by continued professional development, the support and guidance of past and current colleagues, the realization of the vital importance of having content knowledge in many areas, and the participants' personal evolution and maturity are all directly linked to their experience in the profession.

There is no substitute for experience, and a novice teacher can never truly understand the value of spending 15 to 20 years in a particular school and teaching perhaps only one or two subjects. Moreover, the realization that teachers should never rest on their laurels and will always have more to learn in their profession is critical to all teachers' maturity and professional development.

The teachers in this study believe that their experience has shaped their practice as physical education teachers. Having learned from past mistakes and seeking to build on their successes, all of these teachers continue to evolve and mature into even more effective practitioners and are viewed as exceptional teachers by their peers.

Recommendations

1. Student practicum placements for preservice teachers need to include a greater variety of schools and grade levels than is presently the case in most Faculties of Education. As well, the length of each placement and the quality of teaching of the mentor/associate teacher should be reviewed to ensure that the mentor-and-protégé relationship is as strong as possible. Marginal mentor teachers and brief exposures to similar school settings are factors that may lead to poor experiences before undergraduates begin their own teaching careers.

2. Appropriate reflective practices should be taught to undergraduate students so that they can become reflective practitioners before they begin their professional careers. As Manross and Templeton (1997) and Tan (1997) showed, reflection leads to improved teaching practice because teachers can modify or change their teaching to better suit the needs of their learners.

Self-Awareness

Being truly open and honest with themselves may be the most challenging endeavor for all teachers. For those teachers of physical education who have generally been successful, being critical of their teaching and admitting that something needs to be improved are extremely difficult. Some may perceive this recognition as a sign of weakness or incompetence; however, for the teachers in this study, the continual attempt to improve their teaching is a regular part of their practice and a valued aspect of their professional development.

All of the teachers in this study routinely engage in reflective practices and seek out opportunities to improve themselves. Their ability to perceive themselves as imperfect and to admit that their teaching can always be improved is an important aspect of their success as physical education teachers and leaders in the field. Although they have confidence in their teaching abilities, and recognize their organization and planning skills, they are never satisfied with the status quo. Their refusal to be complacent is perhaps another reason for their success as exceptional teachers.

Recommendations

1. All school boards or school administrators need to implement a process of self-assessment for their teachers. Having teachers identify their strengths and

weaknesses as professional educators and choose appropriate measures to improve on their deficiencies would help many teachers to become more accountable and possibly more reflective professionals than they are currently. Administrators or superintendents would need to follow up on these self-assessments and provide support and/or guidance if required.

2. Instructors of PETE programs should insist that their students develop professional growth plans and procedures that would allow these future physical education teachers the opportunity to assess their current teaching and beliefs and to become increasingly self-reflective during their time as undergraduate students. These experiences would provide the foundation for future self-reflective practices, instill the benefits of being self-reflective, and help instructors to increase their awareness of their students' current strengths and weaknesses.

Passion for the Field of Physical Education

As a category to help clarify the themes that emerged out of the interviews with my research participants, *passion* is an ambiguous quality that is difficult to define. Nevertheless, people often use this term and have few problems understanding its meaning and subtle nuances. The teachers in this study definitely have passion for their jobs and often mentioned the joy that they receive from teaching, and their steadfast belief in the subject of physical education.

A student can easily detect a teacher's enthusiasm and the kind of energy that encourages everyone to become involved. Teachers who lack enthusiasm and energy generally have a low sense of commitment to teaching and receive little or no personal

fulfillment from it. All current and future teachers of physical education must have a strong sense of commitment to teaching, for a high level of energy is required to teach it well.

The participants' high level of satisfaction and joy suggests that these qualities are important in any portrait of an effective and potentially exceptional physical educator. Both of these qualities are not necessarily required to be successful or to be classified as an exceptional teacher of physical education, but those teachers who possess them are usually very successful at what they do.

Conclusion

The current study asked the question, W*hy do current physical education teachers engage in their practice as they do?* The findings are very interesting and, in many cases, congruent with those in the literature pertaining to the characteristics of effective and exceptional physical educators. Moreover, to be able to recognize the need to change their teaching, current and future teachers must understand which qualities distinguish exceptional teachers from merely effective ones.

In summarizing the findings, I discovered that these four teachers of physical education engage in their practice because of their true passion for and belief in the subject of physical education. These qualities are contingent on the teachers' self-awareness as educators, their skill in critical reflection, and ability to teach to all types of learners in different environments. The participants' continual evolution as teachers, particularly as teachers of a personally meaningful subject, emerged as the main cause of most of the changes in their practice. For the thousands of students who have learned what *physical education* means from these four subject specialists, they have in turn

created similar and unquestionably unique experiences for these teachers as well. Their students have benefited from these teachers' experiences and are continuing to be provided with a diverse, educationally sound physical education program that reflects their individual needs.

Suggestions for Further Research

In view of the recommendations that I have presented, I suggest the following for further research:

1. Studies are required to assess the degree of influence that *experience* has on the teaching practice of physical educators. The role of experience in their ability to be successful, effective, or exemplary teachers of physical education is worthy of further attention.
2. Further studies that demonstrate an understanding of the links among physical education, health education, social justice, and social competency need to be conducted. The relationship among these topics would be valuable information for practicing educators both in public school systems and postsecondary environments.
3. More research on the topic of gender as it relates to teachers of physical education should be conducted to determine whether gender affects how the subject is valued, planned, and taught. Although nearly one third of all educators who teach physical education are women, surprisingly little research has focused specifically on them as teachers of physical education.
4. Further studies that will probe into the differences between effective and exceptional teachers of physical education should be considered. The

distinction between these two terms can be further explained and elaborated upon if other researchers inquire into it as it pertains to teaching.

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APPENDIX A:

Ethics Review of Proposed Research, Information Letter,

University Consent Form

Ethics Review of Proposed Research

Purpose: The proposed study will use a qualitative mode of inquiry to answer questions pertaining to the professional lives of current physical education teachers. Specifically, a multi-case design of case study will be employed to elicit responses from four to six practicing physical educators in the field. By asking the question "What factors in the careers of physical educators influence their teaching of physical education?" I hope to reveal some of the reasons why physical education teachers do what they do in their practice, as well as show *how* some teachers change and *why* they change over their careers.

Significance: There is currently no research on how the teaching of physical education changes for practicing physical educators as their careers unfold. By identifying the reasons why inservice physical educators do what they do, a better understanding of the significant influences in a physical education teachers' job can be gained. This understanding can potentially influence teacher preparation programs by sharing with preservice teachers the influences they will need to be aware of in their upcoming careers. For practicing physical education teachers, the results of this study through inservice can potentially help them identify areas of improvement in their own practice as well as provide an opportunity for them to reflect on their teaching. This self-reflection can occur by reading any articles that result from this study as well as listening to presentations based on the findings at the conclusion of this study.

Method: The participants in this study have been selected based on the recommendations of qualified and experienced physical educators from across the province of Alberta. Numerous names were forwarded to me based on my appeal to regional physical education representatives and physical education consultants from across the province along with their criteria as to why their recommended individuals would be suitable candidates to be part of my study. I then selected possible candidates based on their experience in teaching physical education, their gender, location, and commitment to the profession based on curriculum involvement and other professional obligations.

The identified participants in my study will be required to meet with me for one and possibly two interviews of between 60-90 minutes in length in an environment that best suits their individual needs. At present, I am not a friend with any of the subjects, however I have had a social introduction to two of the six possible participants. All potential participants are currently employed by school divisions and have physical education as their primary teaching responsibility within their respective schools. I have received a verbal agreement for participation in my study from 4 of the individuals and in each case they are all excited to be part of this research study.

My intent is to interview each subject once with the possibility of a second interview if need be. I also plan on making one formal classroom observation of the teacher while they are teaching physical education. This observation will likely occur for a full morning or afternoon based on the teachers' schedule and personal input. Simple field notes of the teachers' actions, organization and actual teaching will help me gain a clearer understanding of their 'practice as lived'.

All interviews will be transcribed and returned quickly after the formal interview to the interviewee. This process will help ensure the validity and accuracy of the interview data. All interview data will be saved on cassette tape while field notes and transcribed interviews will be stored on my personal computer.

All possible participants in my study will have received an introductory phone call from me outlining my intentions and describing my research plan. As well, all participants will receive a formal letter outlining my research plan and intentions, along with a consent form to either participate or not be involved. Each participant will be encouraged to think about their genuine interest in this study, as well they will be reminded that at any time during the study they will have the right to withdraw, without penalty. Any data collected up to their time of withdrawal will not be used and will be destroyed.

All participants will be notified both in print and verbally that their identities will always remain private and confidential. Any publications or conference presentations based on the results of this study will not jeopardize the participants' identities and anonymity will forever be maintained.

No students or colleagues from the participants' school will be used in this study since my research focus is based on the lives of the practicing physical education teachers alone. No data will be collected from any students since they are not part of my research interest and I am not therefore obtaining informed consent from them. The straightforwardness of this study in terms of using semi-structured interviews with the participants does not cause any potential harm or risk to the participants or others.

The security of the data will be maintained by having all transcribed interviews and notes securely saved on my personal computer under a pseudonym. No other researchers or assistants will be involved in this study so the risk of anyone other than myself locating and using the data is extremely remote.

Information letter

(To Teacher Participants)

November 12, 2003

Hello, my name is David Chorney, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. The purpose of my research is to investigate the underlying reasons why current physical education teachers engage in their practice as they do. I have been a professional educator for 11 years and have taught physical education to school-aged children for 7 years and most recently have taught preservice teachers' courses in the physical education curriculum at both the University of Regina and University of Alberta. My Master's degree was completed at the University of Alberta and focused on the perceptions of female physical education teachers.

My research methodology for this study will employ a case study approach; specifically, it will be a multi-case design. My intent is to interview 4-6 subjects individually for approximately 60-90 minutes. Fellow professionals in the field have recommended you for my study and I have chosen you based on your experience, location, and reputation as a quality teacher of physical education. I would be interested in observing your teaching for one morning or afternoon, either prior to or after my formal interview with you. This observation will be very informal and is simply a small part of helping me understand your practice. All interviews will be tape-recorded and later transcribed by me. The single class observation will allow field notes to be taken by me and used in combination with the interview data to create a clearer picture of your practice. All transcripts will be returned to you for verification of the accuracy of the content, shortly after the interview takes place.

You will always have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time without penalty, and any collected data will be withdrawn from the database and not included in the study if you do withdraw. Your privacy, anonymity and confidentiality will be strictly maintained.

As researcher, I will be using your responses to write my thesis on this important qualitative inquiry. It is my intent to portray the reality of current, practicing physical education teachers and describe how factors in their day-to-day lives influence or affect their teaching of physical education.

At the completion of this research, a written dissertation, subsequent articles, and presentations will undoubtedly follow. I will continue to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all participants for as long as I shall use the collected data.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at 780-492-3751.

Sincerely,

David W. Chorney

University of Alberta

Research Consent Form

I, _____ hereby consent to be
(Print name)

- Interviewed
- Observed in teaching a class

By _____
(Print researcher's name)

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from the research aspect of the study at any time without penalty.
- All information gathered will be treated confidentially and discussed only with the research supervisors.
- Any information that identifies me will be destroyed upon completion of this research.
- I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research.

I also understand that the results of this research will be used only in the following:

- Research dissertation
- Presentations and written articles for other professionals

Address of participant: _____

Contact phone number: _____ (H) _____ (W)

Email address: _____ School name: _____

_____ _____
Signature of participant Date signed

For further information concerning the completion of this form, please contact Mr. David Chorney, Department of Secondary Education, Office 243,

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

APPENDIX B:

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Thesis Question: ***Why do current physical education teachers engage in their practice as they do?***

1. What are some of your memories of PE as a student, and as a pre-service teacher?
2. What would you say is your personal philosophy towards teaching PE? Where has this opinion come from, what specific experiences? Has this philosophy changed over your career as a teacher? If so, how?
3. What are the challenges that you face on a daily basis in teaching PE? How do you approach these challenges?
4. What do you consider to be the essential teaching skills of an effective PE teacher?
5. What would you consider your strengths as a teacher of PE? Have these always been the same or have they emerged over time?
6. What aspects of teaching PE do you believe you still need to improve upon or change if you are to become a better physical educator?
7. Which teaching styles do you employ in your teaching of PE?
8. How would describe your personal teaching style? Has this style changed over your career? If yes, how?
9. Where does your thinking lie with respect to students "reproducing knowledge" vs. "creating their own knowledge" in your classroom?
10. If someone were to observe your classroom while you were teaching, what would the learning environment look like? What would you and your students be doing?
11. How do you feel your students perceive you as their teacher? Parents? Your colleagues? Administrators? Do you believe you are perceived any differently because you teach primarily PE? If so how? Why?
12. How have you changed as a teacher over the course of your career? How have you changed as a teacher of PE over your career?
13. Can you tell me some things that you have learned from your students over your career as a teacher of PE?
14. Why do you think you have had success in teaching PE? What are your reasons?
15. How do you ensure that no child is excluded from learning and reaching their personal potential in your class?

16. What is your approach in dealing with student disruptions or off-task behavior?
17. What examples of "professionalism" do you partake in within the field of PE?
18. Does reflection have any significance for you as a professional educator? If yes, how?
19. What do you value most in your job as a teacher of physical education?
20. Has the role of PE in schools changed in your opinion? If so how?
21. What do you see as the future for PE? Does there need to be a change in its focus or structure for students today and beyond?
22. What advice would you give to undergraduate students who desire to be a physical education teacher?
23. What do you feel needs to be stressed by instructors of a PETE (physical education teacher education) program for future PE teachers?
24. What was it about this research project that appealed to your interest in being involved?
25. Are there any last comments you would like to make regarding your career as a physical education teacher? Or what are your future goals as a teacher of PE?

*Please feel free to give examples and share any stories that will help you answer any of the aforementioned questions. I believe that any personal stories and examples that you share will be valuable information for me when it comes to analyzing and interpreting our conversation.

Thanks so much.
David

APPENDIX C:

Data Analysis Following Data Collection (Coding Themes),

Coding Categories

Data Analysis *Following* Data Collection

Coding Themes

Units of meaning from the summarized transcriptions were highlighted and placed within one of the following themes:

- Caring for students (CS)
- Student input (SI)
- Honesty with students (HS)
- Creating student enjoyment (CSE)
- Respecting students (RS)
- Options and variety for students (OVS)
- External influences (EI)
- Professional development (PD)
- Content knowledge (CK)
- Meaning of PE (MPE)
- Evolution and maturity (EM)
- Varied teaching styles (VTS)
- Early success (ES)
- Reflection of Self & Practice (ROSP)
- Self-improvement (SIM)
- Confidence (C)
- Organization and planning (OP)
- Belief and joy in teaching (BJ)
- Personal fulfillment and commitment to job (PFCOM)

Coding Categories

The themes were grouped and combined within one of the four categories.

1. Relating to/with students (CS, SI, HS, CSE, RS, OVS)
2. Experiences gained through teaching (EI, PD, CK, MPE, EM, VTS)
3. Self-awareness (ES, ROSP, SIM, C, OP)
4. Passion towards the field of physical education (BJ, PFCOM)